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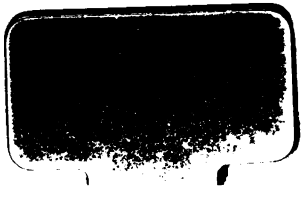

THE BIRTHDAY.

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THE BIRTHDAY:

A

Tale for the Young.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "GIDEON," "JOSIAH," &c.

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To my younger Sisters.

If the pleasure and interest which my dear Sisters have taken in the progress of this little story be ever shared in the slightest degree by others of their age, I shall not regret the step I am taking in permitting it to be laid before the public; though fully sensible that the indulgent partiality which they have shewn towards it is not to be hoped for elsewhere. But my best wishes will be realised, if something beyond mere amusement may at any time result from its perusal, and if it be so blessed as to suggest to the young reader a single good thought, or the practice of one virtuous action.

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THE BIRTHDAY.

CHAPTER I.

THERE are many persons whose eyes are involuntarily arrested by a group of children at play; who take pleasure in them for their own sakes, independently of external circumstances; and, whose interest extending beyond the momentary amusement they afford, love to watch them silently, and to trace the future character of the man in the frolics of the child. To such it matters little whether they are the noisy sunburnt tenants of the village-school, or the well-dressed little lordlings who, once let loose upon the lawn, soon prove superior to the trammels of velvet and lace, and vie with their rustic cotemporaries in merriment and mischief. A person less partial to children would, however, have been forced to stop a minute to admire the little group into which the reader is about to be introduced. They are playing on the terrace oppo-

site the south wing of an old castle. A portion of the building seemed to be very old indeed, as one may judge by the Norman gateway through which one enters it, and the heavy round arches, covered with ivy, belonging to a part evidently uninhabited. But the lancet-windows in the oak hall indicate a later date; while here and there are portions evidently modern, restored or altered by the taste of a recent possessor. The wing opposite to which the children are playing, opening on a terrace, bright and perfumed with flowers, is quite new, having been lately added to the building by its present occupier. The contrast between those cheerful windows looking out upon a beautiful garden, and the ivy-crowned arches on the other side, is like a transition from the sunshine of youth to the gloom of old age.

Round the oak hall, of which I have spoken, are ranged family portraits, whose various costumes would indicate that they belonged to other centuries. But on passing thence to the group upon the terrace, your eye would be struck with the strong resemblance between the children playing before you, and some of the portraits you had been just looking at. The difference of dress does certainly make a great difference in the appearance; the floating hair

of the children is very unlike the powdered edifices upon the heads of some of those ladies of other days: still, if you look well at them, you will trace the same features. There is the same clear transparent lofty forehead, the same full blue eye with its steady fearless gaze, and the same well-formed nose and mouth.

There is one portrait in particular to which I must call your attention; for in the course of this story you will hear something of the person it represents. It is that of a lady dressed in black, whose appearance is very different from that of the other pictures round the hall; for whereas they are for the most part gorgeously apparelled, she is very simply attired, and her only head-dress is a black veil. Now, of all the portraits in the oak hall, this one most resembles in features the children on the terrace; so strong is the likeness that you would have thought she must be their mother: but this is not the case, for the person painted in that picture lived 800 years ago. Any one who looked at that face once would turn to look at it again, not only for its beauty, for the deep blue of its eyes, and the transparent whiteness of its smooth, placid forehead, but from a sort of fascination in its expression, a sweetness in its smile, that rivets all who see it. But till one knows something

about the lady, one cannot understand that peculiar mixture of gravity and sweetness in her countenance. As for the merry group whose features are so like hers, they are all so fond of this one picture, that they stand looking at it very often; they do not know who the person represented is, so they call her "the gentle lady;" and they frequently amuse themselves with running to different parts of the hall, and watching her eyes still fixed upon them, and wondering how it is that, without moving, her eyes follow them, and how she can look at all of them at once.

But it must not be forgotten that these pages are destined for the young—and youth prefers the living to the dead. It suffices, therefore, to add, that "the gentle lady" and all the other portraits in the hall are the ancestors of those children—people who lived in that same house, and had the same name many hundred years ago. That name is Fitzmaur; and the owners of the house, park, and children, are the Marquis and Marchioness de Courcy. That fine handsome boy of about twelve years of age, with short light curls brushed off his forehead, who is mending a fishing-rod while he listens to the others talking, is the eldest son; he is called Lord Fitzmaur. He is a fine noble-looking

fellow, and seems very good-humoured and gentle. That pretty little girl sitting on the grass at her brother's feet is the Lady Mary; she is so like him in face, that you must at once perceive their relationship. She is only ten years old; but she is so tall, and her step is so stately, that you would think her as old as her eldest brother. She is laughing heartily at the unskilfulness of Lord Edward, who, standing just behind her, is twisting flowers into her long fair hair, which almost reaches the grass on which she sits. He is a year her junior, and a very madcap is he; from the look of roguery in his full blue eye, you would judge him to be capable of any prank. Then a few yards beyond, sits a little plump fat fellow, scarcely four years old, diligently building a house of bricks, which a still younger boy, who can scarcely toddle, as diligently kicks down, and then both shriek with laughter at the exploit. These two last mentioned are called Walter and James, and any one may perceive that they are universal pets. They are as handsome as the rest, and just like them.

These are the children that form so pretty a group upon the terrace; but no, they have not all been described. There is one yet that has not been mentioned. Who is that little girl

dressed so simply, yet very neatly, sitting by Lady Mary? She cannot be one of the same family, she is so totally different in every respect. She is a graceful fragile-looking child, altogether of a smaller make than her young companions. You might perhaps pass her by in a crowd without noticing her; but if once you had observed her countenance, you never could forget it. At first you would not be struck with any remarkable beauty in her face, particularly after you had been gazing on the regular, well-formed features of Mary and her brothers; but when you had spoken to her once or twice, although she has less symmetry of feature, you would be constrained to think her the loveliest of the group. She has the most melting dark hazel eyes, which seem to contain a depth of feeling unusual at her age; a rich glow through a clear brown skin, shaded by chestnut curls clustering round her head, gives her rather a foreign look. She is something like one of those pretty faces of Spanish peasants, which that master-painter of Spain makes almost to speak to you from the canvass. The other children call her Alice; from something they have just said, I gather that she is of the same age as the Lady Mary; but, as I stated, she is considerably smaller, and whereas the former moves

like a descendant of the Fitzmaurs, Alice skips along like a little fairy.

"I have something to tell you all," said Fitzmaur, with a very bright smile, placing himself so as to have a full view of the effect of his words. "Yes, I have something to tell you all; two pieces of good news."

"Oh, then, pray tell us," answered Edward; "do not keep us guessing so long as you generally do."

"I think you ought to give one or two guesses," said Fitzmaur.

"Oh, no," replied Edward; "there is nothing puts me into such a fidget as guessing; I am always so dreadfully impatient to know the end of every thing."

"Well, then," said the goodnatured brother, "I must tell you at once, though it is very good fun to see your puzzled faces. Well, the first good news is, that uncle John is coming here the day after to-morrow."

"Uncle John!" cried Mary, "I thought he was at Paris."

"Yes; but he has returned home sooner than he intended; and now he is coming to stay with us till we go back to London."

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Edward; "hurrah for uncle John! What gallops we shall have over the

park; there is no one for a ride like uncle John. I hope he will bring his beautiful chestnut. Do you know, Alice, when last he was here, I used to feed that chestnut every day, and at last it knew me so well that it pricked up its ears at the sound of my voice, and would come when I called it."

"Indeed," said Alice; "how very pleasant! I hope it will not forget you."

"What beautiful presents uncle John will bring us from Paris!" said Mary; "he always brings us presents; but this time they will be splendid."

"Oh, I do not care for the presents half so much as for seeing him," said Lord Fitzmaur. "But now do you not all wish to know the other good news?"

"That is to say," said Alice, archly, "are you not longing to tell it?"

"Oh, you sly thing!" said Fitzmaur, laughing; "to look so meek and quiet, and then to make such saucy speeches. I have a great mind to punish you by keeping you in suspense. But as I am sure curiosity would prevent your sleeping, I will tell you. You know my birthday will be very soon, and papa and mamma have promised that we shall have a regular fête. In the evening, after a good holyday, we are to

have a dance on the grass, if it is fine, if not, in the saloon; all the tenants and farmers about are to dance, and the servants too; and then we are to have all sorts of games. Will it not be delightful?"

There could not be two opinions on this point among the happy party.

"And now," said Edward, "it is my turn to give you good news; though, perhaps, part of it only properly concerns Fitzmaur and me."

"Out with it, then!" was the rejoinder.

"In the first place, mamma had a letter this morning from Mr. Aylmer; and he says that he is pronounced to be much better, and on the road to a perfect recovery."

"Oh, that is good news!" cried the whole party at once, "surely that concerns us all; we are all glad to hear of poor Mr. Aylmer's recovery."

"Yes; but now comes the little bit for Fitzmaur and me," continued Edward, with a waggish look from the corner of his eye,—"he is *so* much better that he requires to be better still; and it is pronounced advisable for him not to recommence his delightful task of teaching our young ideas, &c., just yet; so he is to go to Hastings for another month, and our young ideas may enjoy another holyday."

"It is too bad of you," said Mary, laughing, "not to wish to see Mr. Aylmer again; I am sure he is very kind to you."

"Of course, I like him with all my heart," replied her brother; "but I defy any one to be so tenderly attached to a tutor as not to like a holyday better. So pray do not make a virtuous face, Mary; you know you would not object to Miss Dalton's receiving a pleasant invitation from some *dear* friend."

"Oh no," said Mary; "I acknowledge I like a holyday too; but then I am not so fond of Miss Dalton as you are of Mr. Aylmer."

"Come, Alice, I hope you agree in our taste for holydays," said Fitzmaur.

"I think it is quite fair," Alice answered, "that you should be glad of one, since you hear at the same time that Mr. Aylmer is better. As for me, I think I learn more of actual lessons on my holydays than on other days."

"How can that be?" inquired her companions.

"I think it a happy day and a holyday, if my father is at home and at leisure; but then he naturally takes that opportunity of giving me more to do."

"Yes; you are always better than we are," said Mary. "I heard papa say that my brothers

were sad idle fellows, and that it would not do to have many such vacations."

"After all, we have not had more," replied Fitzmaur, "than we shall have twice a year when we go to Eton, which will be in two years."

"Yes," returned Edward, "and as Mr. Aylmer came to prepare us for Eton, he is now very properly preparing us for Eton holydays. At all events, it is capital that it should happen just when uncle John is coming,—we shall have nothing to do but to ride all day."

In the course of half an hour, while our little friends, with arms entwined, were still pacing up and down, discussing this and other knotty points, the party from the dining-room joined them on the terrace. There were several ladies and gentlemen present, besides Lord and Lady De Courcy, and they all took great notice of the children; but none more than Lord De Courcy himself, who chased them round the terrace, tossed the boys into the air, and shook hands very courteously and warmly with little Alice.

Amongst the party was one gentleman whom at first the children did not see, for he was standing talking, with his back turned towards them. He was tall and dark, dressed in complete black, and looked very grave. When he turned round,

the little ones, with one accord, ran up to him, and seemed more delighted to see him than all the rest of the party: and yet, at first, one would not have supposed him suited to children, he looked so very grave. Indeed, fond as they seemed of him, they did not treat him as they did their other guests—they did not romp with him, or pull him by the coat; but they stood round him, each eager for notice, and their cheeks glowed with pleasure when he caressed them. Grave as he was, he seemed to understand their little ways,—he had a smile and a kind word for each; but if his eye rested for a minute longer on one than the rest, it was on the little dark-headed stranger. He did not stay among them many minutes, but pleaded press of business as obliging him to return home at an early hour. The marquess very reluctantly admitted the plea, and wished him good night. Certainly the grave gentleman looked often and earnestly at Alice; whether because he thought those bright hazel eyes of hers' lovelier than the rich blue of her companions', it is impossible to say; but as he was going, his eye still lingered upon Alice—and then he left them all.

The conversation soon turned on the pleasures of the birthday; and one of the ladies sug-

gested that there ought to be a throne erected at one end, and that Fitzmaur should be king of the day. This proposal was snapped at; nothing else was talked of but the young king; and all the schemes he made for his short-lived reign, and all the discussions respecting his throne, would occupy more space and time than I have to bestow. As they returned, the same lady said apart to another, but in a very audible voice, "What a good queen Lady Mary would make!—she moves like one, every gesture is princely; I never saw such an aristocratic carriage."

It is to be hoped the lady did not mean Mary to hear those words, or she would have been almost breaking the sixth commandment; for surely to kill one virtue in a young mind is nearly equal to killing or injuring the body, particularly that first of all virtues, humility. But Mary did hear the speech, and she remembered it, and thought a good deal about it. Poor Mary! she was thinking of what she had heard, and instead of jumping and playing about, she held her head higher than usual, moved with a measured step; and the thought rose perpetually to her mind, "I wonder if I am looking like a queen."

It is but justice, however, to Mary to state,

that when in a short time a servant came to announce that "Nurse Roberts had come to take Miss Alice home," she forgot herself and her queen-like appearance, and only thought of her little friend.

The reader will long ago have discovered that Mary and Alice were not sisters; but they loved each other as if they were; they were of just the same age; and Mary really seemed to think that there was no pleasure in any amusement if not shared by Alice. In fact, the little dark-eyed girl seemed to be a general favourite with her playfellows, particularly with Mary and Fitzmaur; and yet if these were to have been asked why this was, probably they would not at first have assigned any precise reason: they would have said that there was something about her no one could help loving, that she was always ready if wanted, and yet never in any one's way.

"I am sorry you are going so early," said Mary, as she watched Nurse Roberts tying on Alice's bonnet; "it is only eight o'clock; could you not stay a little longer?"

Alice. "No, dear Mary, not to-night; my father told me not to stay after nurse had called for me."

Fitzmaur. "Well, then, you will come to-

morrow very early, I hope quite early; for you know we can do nothing without you."

Alice [*laughing*]. "Oh, I hope you are not quite so badly off, for perhaps I may not be able to come to-morrow. I think my father said he had something for me to do; but you may be sure I shall come if I can."

Mary. "We will not hear of any excuse; you *must* come, for it is a holyday. It will be too bad if your father forbids you."

Alice put her little hand up playfully to Mary's mouth, and said, "You must not dare to call what my father does *too bad.*"

Edward. "Well, I will tell you what, Alice, if you are not here by ten o'clock, you may expect to see us all at your hall-door, all ready marshalled for an assault. And then see if we do not carry you off."

Alice. "I suspect, if my father peeped out from his study-window, it would be more of a race than a battle, to see which would scamper away fastest."

At this moment, the lady who had said that Mary was like a queen, and whose name was Mrs. Dawson, turned to a friend and remarked, "What a pity it is that Alice's father rules her with so much severity! I believe she does not express a wish contrary to his. It is a

bad plan; it crushes children's spirits, and makes them deceitful. The marchioness's system of education is so very superior."

The reader shall judge for himself of the severity with which Alice was ruled at home. Whether this lady's remark was intended solely for the ears of the friend to whom she addressed it, or of the marchioness who was standing close by, it would be difficult to say, for she got no answer from either; and she looked very much as people do who put themselves out of their way to pay an unnecessary compliment, which, after all, is not taken. As for Alice herself, she was too busy saying good night to every one to hear what was said; and it was the last thing that ever occurred to her to suppose that others were talking of her.

"Pray come to-morrow," were Mary's last words to her; "for, besides other reasons, our cousin Augusta is coming to-morrow; you know how much we dislike playing with her,—it will be twice as bad without you to help us."

Alice must have been sorry to leave such a pleasant party, where she was such a favourite; one would, therefore, have supposed that she would have gone reluctantly, or lingered, or looked back upon them as she moved slowly away. But, on the contrary, her step grew

brisker and more bounding as she advanced; so that Nurse Roberts once or twice called out, "Bless your young heart! you do not expect my old limbs to keep pace with yours, do you?" Now they have reached a small white house, the only ornament of which is the luxuriance of its creepers: how much smaller it is than the splendid mansion Alice has just quitted! and how little is the garden, enclosed by a wicket-gate, to be compared in magnificence with the terraces on which Alice had so lately been playing! And yet how eagerly her little hands unclose the gate, and how merrily she runs up to the door! A solitary lamp shines through one of the lower windows: straight to this room Alice turns. And, young reader, if you will follow her thither, you will be ushered into an old-fashioned room, with oak wainscoting and a curiously carved oak chimney-piece; the coverings of the chairs are tapestry, some of an ancient date; two sides of the room are lined with books of various ages and sizes; and a bureau, filled with papers, stands open at the furthest end; over the chimney-piece hangs a painting of the Holy Family, by Rubens. At a writing-table sits, seemingly deep in thought, the grave dark gentleman whom last we saw at Fitzmaur Castle: he is writing; but an old folio volume is open

by his side, probably for reference; several other books lie scattered round him; and an open box of "letters unanswered," which seems to be tolerably well filled, bespeaks a night's work. This is the Rev. William Russell, rector of the parish, and Alice is the rector's daughter. Deeply engaged though he was, the rector looks up as Alice gently advances, though he had not heard the door open (for her little fairy step had always the power of rousing him from the deepest reverie): "Good child, you are very punctual," he says, glancing first at the clock on the chimney-piece, and then opening his arms to receive her. How Alice has bounded into her father's arms, and how her soft melting eyes are drinking in the smile of approbation which accompanied his words! He gives her one long kiss upon her forehead, and then putting her down upon the ground, seems again absorbed in his former occupation.

Notwithstanding the fond caress she had just received, Alice did not take that opportunity (which some would have thought a very good one) for asking leave to go to play with her young friends the next day. She saw her father was busy, so she took care not to disturb him, but stood quietly by his side till he should speak to her again; and when at last he turned

round to wish her good night, she merely knelt down before him to receive his accustomed blessing, without which she would not have considered her day well ended. Then, when he had laid his hand upon her head and blessed her, she retired to her own little room within his. This room was Alice's favourite retreat; her father had made it as comfortable as any little girl could wish; it had a casement-window, looking like a bower from the number of roses and honeysuckles which peeped in. There in one corner stood her table, on which lay her Prayer-book; and at this table, night and morning, the innocent child knelt down to pray for blessings on herself and her beloved father. Near it and over it were hung a few prints of Scripture subjects, of which her favourite was that of Christ blessing the little children: she often said, that to look at that picture made her feel good; and when, as we have described, she received her father's blessing, she would think of that little group of children kneeling at our Saviour's feet, and realise His blessings bestowed by her father's hands. But the pleasant circumstance respecting this little room, in Alice's opinion, was its position within her father's; for she knew that he never retired to rest without first looking at her, and imprinting a kiss upon her cheek.

And though she was generally asleep, and therefore unconscious of it at the time, still she liked to lay her head upon her pillow, feeling certain of having his kiss.

Alice was Mr. Russell's only child; her mother had died when she was born, and consequently she had been trained and brought up under her father's sole superintendence. As much time as he could spare from his professional duties, he gave to instructing her; but as necessarily these hours could not be long, and were liable to constant interruption, he had trained her to employ herself independently, and to seek and derive improvement from every thing around her. For a considerable portion of the year, Alice had no companions of her own age; for Lord de Courcy and his family stayed but a short time at Fitzmaur Castle, spending the rest of the year at their other country residences, or in London. There were no other children in the neighbourhood residing sufficiently near to be her playfellows; so that the little girl was thrown very much upon herself for amusement. Her companions were, her father, whom she loved devotedly, and her good nurse Roberts, whom she thought the kindest old woman in the world, and who, in her turn, deliberately asserted, that no place, not even Fitzmaur

Castle, contained a child to be compared with Miss Alice. The consequence of living so much with older persons was, that Alice was perhaps a little more thoughtful than children usually are at her age; she had acquired a habit (probably from so often having no one to speak to) of observing all that passed silently, and then thinking over it; and sometimes during an evening's chat with her father, when he was sufficiently disengaged, she would give him the result of her little reflections. It would often happen, however, that Mr. Russell was so completely engrossed by his parish duties, that he had not half an hour to spare for Alice; he would sometimes return in the evening, looking wearied and oppressed with care, with numerous letters to write. Young readers, you probably know little about the anxieties and griefs to which a faithful pastor is subject. If he realises the holiness of his office, and loves and watches over his flock like a father over his family, then, of course, if any of that flock are hardened, or if some, of whom he had hoped good things, fall away, he feels bitter grief as that of a parent over an undutiful child. In a large parish, where one individual has the care of many souls, how numerous must be the trials of this nature! Whenever, therefore, Alice saw her father re-

turn home looking sad or very busy, she used to take care not to disturb him. She fetched his chair, and placed it at his writing-table without speaking. When nurse Roberts had made the tea at the other end of the room, she quietly brought him his cup, which he sometimes seemed to drink without knowing what he was about: then if he was writing a letter, she watched for the moment when he folded it up, and lighted a candle for him. These and a thousand other little affectionate offices, Alice performed for her father so silently, and moving about the room so very quietly, that he gave her the name of his little fairy; because when he looked up from his book, or from a brown study, he used to find every thing done for him, as if by the wand of a fairy. Very much pleasanter, however, to Alice, were the evenings on which her father returned a little less busy, with time to spare for his child. She enjoyed more than any thing in the world one of those pleasant evening chats at the tea-table, when she would relate to her father all she had done during the day, and he, in his turn, would tell her some little adventure he might have met with during his rambles through his parish.

But I dare say my young readers are curious to know whether Alice had not to learn lessons

like all her cotemporaries; for I have generally observed, that when children are brought together, almost the first question they ask each other is, "Do you do many lessons?" Well, then, Alice had lessons to learn; and there was nothing she was more afraid of than of neglecting any thing her father had ordered her to do. Divine service was always performed at the parish church at half-past seven in the morning, at which Mr. Russell and his curate regularly officiated, and Alice always attended it. After this, she and her father breakfasted together; and during breakfast, and for an hour after it, Mr. Russell, unless unavoidably called away, instructed his little girl, heard her the tasks she had prepared for him the preceding day, and gave her directions for the employment of that just begun. He had besides often messages to send to neighbouring cottages, or to the village-school, and then Alice was his messenger. She was also very fond of flowers, and used to consider the garden her own; as much time as she could command she spent in weeding, and raking, and arranging her flower-beds.

Such was the quiet unvaried tenor of Alice's life during the greater part of the year. While Lord de Courcy's family, however, were at the castle, it was a sort of holyday time to her, for

her father, thinking it good for her to play with other children of her own age when there was an opportunity, used to let her off many of her lessons, and allow her to spend a good deal of time at the castle.

CHAPTER II.

SELF-DENIAL.

ALICE could not help hoping the next morning that she should be able to spend the day at the castle; for the sun was shining so brightly, and every thing looked so lively, that she felt lively too, and in the humour for a good game of play. When, therefore, her father had finished his scarcely tasted breakfast, and had drawn back his chair ready to give her her accustomed place on his knee, Alice nestled her little face up to his, and said, "I should like very much to go to the castle again to-day; Fitzmaur and Mary begged me very hard to go."

Mr. Russell. "I think, my child, you have had a great deal of play this week; would it not be better to spend one day usefully now? I had thought of giving you something to do for me."

Alice. "Oh, very well; I should like to do something for you. What shall it be?"

Mr. Russell. "And then you must do something for yourself; you must learn those lessons which have been so long put off. And have

you finished that frock which you promised to widow Benson's child a fortnight ago?"

Alice. "No, indeed; I am sorry to say I have not. I will finish it to-day. But what shall I do for you?"

Mr. Russell. "I wish you to tell the gardener to gather some of the ripest fruit, and also some asparagus; and then I wish you to take them carefully in your basket to poor Mary Cullen, at the other end of the village; she has been very ill, and requires some little delicacies. Then, as you go to her, you will have to pass John Trench's house, so you may as well take him this book, which I promised to give him; but do not look into it yourself."

Alice. "Very well, father; I will do all you wish. I believe nurse has been preparing some medicines for Mary Cullen; I may as well take them at the same time."

At a very little past ten o'clock, when Alice had finished reading to her father, she was equipped with her basket on her arm, ready for her walk into the village; when just as she was going down the steps from the house into the garden, she saw her three friends, Fitzmaur, Mary, and Edward, coming up to the wicket-gate. She had not believed that they really meant in earnest to come for her, and the sight of them amused her

so much, that she sat down on the lowest step, and burst into a long and merry laugh.

"It is easy to laugh," cried Edward, clearing the gate at a bound; "but now, Madam Alice, you are coming with us. Why, you look like a good little maiden going to market," continued he, uncovering her basket, and rather unceremoniously pulling about the contents. "Let us see, what have we here? Mary Cullen? Ah, poor Mary Cullen, here's fruit to make her sick, and physic to make her well again."

"Pray take care," said Alice; "you see I cannot come to-day; my father has sent me to do these commissions."

"What commissions?" said Edward; "to quack poor Mary Cullen? I do not know who she may be; but I know, if I were in her place, which side of the basket I should make most free with."

The two other children coming up at this minute, all three began an eager argument with Alice, to induce her to come with them to the castle. They prayed, they teazed, they coaxed, but all to no purpose; her answer to each and all was, "My father has desired me not to go to-day."

Edward was beginning to be almost angry; but Mary, after trying in vain to allure her

little friend, exclaimed: "Well, I must admit you are the best of us all; what naughty children we are to try to make you disobey!"

Just as they were all most eagerly discussing the point, Mr. Russell, who had heard the sound of merry voices, came out into the garden.

Blushing, half with shame and half with pleasure, the little intruders came up to the kind pastor, and thrusting their hands into his, begged of him to allow them to have Alice.

"I guessed as much," said Mr. Russell, laughing; "here you all are trying to decoy my daughter. Well, I have no very great objection; if Alice herself particularly wishes it, she shall go."

Alice knew from the tone of her father's voice, that he said this with a silent hope that her wishes would turn in the opposite direction, and therefore answered, "I had rather go to-morrow instead."

Edward. "Now that is not fair; Mr. Russell knew that Alice would say that she did not care much about it; therefore he should have given us our choice."

Mary. "I have a particular reason for wishing for her just to-day, more than any other day."

Mr. Russell. "Come, now,—pray let me

know the reason. Perhaps it is such a good one that I shall relent."

Mary coloured, and looked not quite determined what to say. At length, drawing close to him, and looking up with a pleading smile, as if to disarm him, she whispered, "Because Augusta is coming to-day; and we cannot bear her; we dislike her so much."

Mr. Russell. "But what good will Alice do? will she make you like her better? If so, she shall go by all means; for it is very naughty to dislike any one."

Mary. "No; not exactly that; but—"

Mr. Russell. "But she will be a resource when you want to shirk playing with Augusta. Is not that it?"

Mary. "Yes; I believe that is the secret reason."

Mr. Russell. "So I supposed; and that is one of my reasons for keeping Alice at home. I knew Augusta was coming, and I also knew that she is no favourite with her cousins; I therefore thought you would all get on with her better, if, for the first day, you were alone with her. You see, my children, it is not as if you had the power of choosing whether you will play with her or not; you must amuse her, because she is your guest; and therefore you are

obliged to be civil to her. Will it not, then, be better to make up your minds to face the difficulty, instead of trying to shirk it, and to lessen the disagreeableness by being very good-humoured and yielding yourselves?"

Fitzmaur. "I daresay you think us very wrong not to like Augusta; but you would not, if you knew the reason. She is so tiresome and teazing. I do not mean that she intends to teaze,—I daresay she does not,—but she always thinks so much of herself; she will have her own way, and makes such a fuss about every thing. One day, when she was staying with us at Oak Park, we had all set out to take a nice scrambling walk; and we were all obliged to turn back again, because the path through the wood was rather dirty, and 'Miss Augusta' had her best silk frock on, and was afraid of spoiling it. She thinks so much about her smart dresses, much more than Mary does."

Edward. "Then, again, she is such a coward; and of all faults in the world I hate cowardice most; I do like people to hold their heads up and face a little danger for the fun of it. Another of our walks was quite destroyed because Augusta could not pass a cow. The cow was as quiet as a lamb, and had too much sense

to think about such a simpleton as Augusta; but, however, pass it she would not. How I quizzed her! I kept on frightening her by assuring her the cow was at her heels. How she did run! It makes me laugh to think of it."

Mary. "Yes, Edward; but it was too bad of you; I begged of you not to go on so,—it only made her worse."

Edward. "But she was such a goose, she ran so hard that she did not see where she was going, and turning sharp round a corner, she came nearly between the horns of a bull standing there! She scampered back, and found there was no cow following her after all. Then she went blubbering to her mamma, who, instead of scolding her for spoiling our walk, kissed her and consoled her; and said, her 'dear Augusta was so timid, so nervous, that she inherited all *her own sensitiveness of character;*' and a great many other fine words she used. Then she gave her pretty dear a box of sugarplums, and me a box on the ear."

Mr. Russell. "I must say there was more judgment in the second gift than in the first."

Edward. "I thought you would say so. But do you think it was right of Augusta to be such a simpleton, and spoil our walk?"

Mr. Russell. "No, indeed; I think cow-

ardice very wrong; she was a naughty girl; and as you both committed the same fault, I should have given you the same punishment."

Edward. "The same fault! Do you mean that I was a coward?"

Mr. Russell. "Indeed I do; I am not sure whether you were not the greater coward of the two; for it is natural to a girl to be timid, and only blameable when it is not controlled. But there is nothing so cowardly and unmanly as for a boy, instead of using his superior strength and courage to protect and help those who are weaker than himself, to laugh at and frighten them. It is very bad indeed. How much more noble it would have been to have shewn her there was no danger, by going between her and the cow, and speaking at least courteously to her!"

Edward [*looking very much ashamed*]. "It was wrong of me certainly,—I will never do it again. You have just mentioned what Fitzmaur did when she came running back, and had to pass the cow after all; he took her hand and led her past it so politely! I suppose he was right, but I laughed at him for it. The fact is, I hate politeness."

Mr. Russell. "Why do you hate politeness?"

Edward. "Because it means nothing; it is all outside. When people say polite things to each other, they never think them. I have seen ladies and gentlemen bowing and scraping to each other by the hour; and directly they are out of each other's hearing, they begin to quiz and call each other bores. And very often people say, 'How glad I am to see you!' to a person whom they wish at Jericho all the time."

Mr. Russell. "I agree with you in disliking such politeness as that; and if your only ideas of politeness are associated with such hypocrisy, you had better discard the word, and cultivate courtesy."

Edward. "What is the difference between courtesy and politeness?"

Mr. Russell. "You shall find out for yourself, by looking into this little volume of Johnson's Dictionary."

Edward took the book, and read, "*polite*—elegant of manners, glossy;" and "*courteous*—elegant of manners, kind."

Mr. Russell. "I grant you, the politeness you have described is like a glossy surface, a piece of polished marble, which remains cold and hard. But true Christian courtesy is 'kind,'—it comes from the heart. It cannot speak ill of the person it has greeted, because it 'think-

eth no evil;' or wish far away the person it pretends to like, because it is 'without dissimulation.' It tenders kind offices, because it 'does to all men whatsoever it would that men should do to it.' This is true courtesy; and if it were more cultivated both by rich and poor, it would be well,—for though an external polish may embellish it, a rough exterior cannot conceal it."

Mary. "But what I thought much worse than running away from the cow was, her taking my doll to play with, letting it fall, and so spoiling its face; and then hearing mamma scold me for carelessness, and not confessing that she had done it."

Fitzmaur. "I hope, sir, you do not think we are telling you all this in order to be unkind to Augusta; I assure you, it is only that you may see why we do not like her for a companion, —because I feared, from your manner, that you thought it wrong of us. But she is really so very selfish. You know, perhaps, that Mary and she are always desired of an evening to play something on the piano-forte, that their mammas may judge what progress they have made. Augusta likes this,—she is accustomed to show-off; but poor Mary is so frightened that she quite trembles. She plays in general fully as well as our cousin; I think, better; but on these occasions she is so

nervous, that she makes all manner of mistakes. However, at one time she had resolved to please mamma, and so she had studied an air of Mozart's for a whole fortnight before the time: she had practised so successfully and perseveringly, that she had it off by heart quite perfectly,—you cannot think how well she played it—"

Edward. "I am witness to the fact of the practising; for I remember I got so sick of the air, that I wished Mozart had been hanged before he composed it."

Fitzmaur. "Well, but let me go on with my story. When the evening came, Augusta was of course asked to play first, being the visitor; and, to our consternation, she produced the very piece which Mary had been taking so much pains to prepare. It would not do for both to play the same; so we all explained the case to Augusta, and implored her to play something else, which she could easily have done, as she knew a great many. But she positively refused, declaring that she had a right to play any thing she liked. And when mamma called out from the other side of the room, to know what all our whispering was about, she said *aloud*, that Mary wished to play Mozart's air instead of her. Of course, Mary was rebuked for selfishness. Augusta then played the piece beau-

tifully, and with great applause. Poor Mary had to play one she did not know well; and being, besides, more frightened than usual, she made a complete failure of it. So Augusta had all the praise, and Mary was blamed for inattention and selfishness. Was not that too bad? I explained it to papa and mamma afterwards; and they were very sorry, and angry with Augusta."

Edward. "I never was so indignant,—it was such a shame! I was resolved to have my revenge: so the next evening I got a spider—(Augusta, amongst her other follies, is so afraid of a spider, that she always screams when she sees one);—well, I got a spider and set it crawling about on the piano-forte (Augusta never dares scream at a spider when papa is in the room); so I saw her watching it in a great fright, thinking every minute it would crawl on her fingers. She was so occupied with the spider, and so frightened, that she played an immense number of wrong notes. Her mamma was much annoyed; she said her dear Augusta was so extremely musical, it was quite a pleasure to hear her *in general;* but that night she seemed nervous. It was such fun! Augusta went off half crying with vexation."

Mr. Russell. "Really, Edward, I am almost

angry with you, for boasting of your naughty tricks as if they were fine exploits. Do you not know that it is very wicked to take revenge? If you do such a thing again, I shall be very angry indeed."

Mary. "But do you not think there is some excuse for our not liking to have Augusta to play with us?"

Mr. Russell. "Yes; I should think she must be a very disagreeable playfellow; but that does not alter my first opinion, that it is better you should entertain her for the first day without Alice. You will have to put up with a great many little annoyances, I do not doubt; but you must look upon that as one of your very few trials. You must resolve to be good-natured, to try to set her a good example in every thing, and then bear with her humours. She is probably a little spoiled, from being an only child."

Edward. "Alice is an only child; so that won't do for an excuse."

Mr. Russell. "Well, but whatever may be the cause, it is evident that she has not learned her duty so carefully as you have; and it is more charitable to suppose that it may not be all her fault. However, it is of no use for you or me to try to find out whose fault it is; the

question for you to ask yourselves is, whether it is likely that you can correct her?"

All the Children. "No, certainly not."

Mr. Russell. "And yet you are obliged to play with her; are you not?"

Mary. "Yes; I am sure papa would be angry if we did not."

Mr. Russell. "Well, then, what remains for you to do?"

Fitzmaur. "I suppose, to make the best of it."

Mr. Russell. "Exactly so; to make the best of it. But remember, the way to make the best of it is, to turn the annoyance to the best account. Now the way to do this is, to behave so as to benefit yourselves, if you cannot benefit her; and the probability is, that in so doing, you will in some measure benefit her also."

Fitzmaur. "How are we to do this? What benefit can it be to us to be worried?"

Mr. Russell. "Surely it will give you a good opportunity of exercising the virtue of self-denial, a virtue so necessary to be a Christian, and yet so often forgotten."

Mary. "Self-denial means giving up, of one's own accord, something that one likes very much. Is it not so?"

Mr. Russell. "Yes, that is self-denial; and

it is absolutely necessary for a Christian character."

Edward. "Why is it so necessary?"

Mr. Russell. "Because we cannot go to heaven, unless we have denied ourselves on earth."

Fitzmaur. "Oh, how very dreadful! Are you quite sure that no one can go to heaven without self-denial?"

Mr. Russell. "You are aware, surely, that no one can go to heaven without following Christ; and He said that *if any one would come after Him, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Him.*"

Edward. "Daily! that means every day."

Mr. Russell. "Yes, every day."

Mary. "What does taking up the cross mean?"

Mr. Russell. "It means doing something painful or disagreeable for Christ's sake."

Fitzmaur. "And we must do that every day?"

Mr. Russell. "We must deny ourselves every day."

Mary. "That is very sad, because so few people do it. Will all the people in the world, who forget to deny themselves, be severely punished?"

Mr. Russell. "That is nothing to you or me; let us only attend to ourselves. We may be quite sure that we, knowing so well what is right, shall be punished if we fail in it."

Mary. "Have all the good people that have ever lived in the world denied themselves?"

Mr. Russell. "Yes; all *good* people deny themselves, in obedience to their Saviour's commandment, and to imitate Him. His whole life on earth was one continued self-denial; He never sought enjoyment; His was constant suffering. Just consider, He left His heavenly kingdom, His glorious dwelling, to wander about on earth, without a home, with no possessions. He might have chosen to be born a prince in a splendid palace; but He was born in a stable, the Son of a poor woman. He was hungry, thirsty, weary. He endured taunts, revilings, buffetings. Lastly, He went through scourgings, and died an agonising death upon the cross. Do you not think that, after dwelling upon all these sufferings which the Son of God endured for us, if we love Him, we shall feel an earnest wish to do His will? And if His will requires us to make a sacrifice of some sinful pleasure, or even of some pleasure in itself innocent, shall we not make the sacrifice?"

Fitzmaur. "Oh yes, it seems quite easy

when one thinks of it in that way; but when one comes to the point, it is very difficult to give up one's wishes. What sort of self-denials have good people generally practised?"

Mr. Russell. "God's Saints in all ages, knowing that those who wish to enjoy Christ's glory must bear His cross, have given up cheerfully whatever opposed His will. Possessions, friends, family, and even life, have been relinquished by such, when they interfered with duty."

Edward. "How do you mean that they gave up their lives?"

Mr. Russell. "By suffering martyrdom rather than deny their faith. When the Church of Christ was first planted in heathen countries, wicked men opposed themselves and persecuted the servants of God. These, rather than renounce their Lord, endured the most dreadful tortures; nothing could daunt them, the will of their Saviour was their only will, and His strength was their strength. All this you will read about when you read Church-history."

Mary. "But nobody is persecuted now for being a Christian, so one could not be self-denying in that way."

Mr. Russell. "Not exactly in that way; but long after persecutions ceased, when the Christian Church was firmly established and was

at peace, still those who tried to serve God were self-denying. And so in all ages they have been, and so they must ever be; for there is no true religion without self-denial. History tells us of kings who renounced their thrones, that they might serve God in retirement and poverty; rich people sold their possessions to relieve the poor, and performed the most menial offices, realising their Lord's assertion, that 'inasmuch as they did it to one of the least of these, they did it unto Him.'"

Mary. "What do you mean by realising a thing?"

Mr. Russell. "Believing it so firmly, and thinking about it so vividly, that it becomes to one's mind real and actual, instead of mere words."

Fitzmaur. "You mean, that when doing any thing for the poor, one should feel as if one was really doing it for our Saviour?"

Mr. Russell. "Just so. Do you not think that such a way of realising our Lord's words would give us much holier feelings towards the poor?"

Mary. "Oh yes, indeed. I am afraid I have not very holy feelings towards them. I hope you will not be shocked, if I tell you that I have often wondered how Alice can go about

among the poor as she does. I do not think I should like it, even if I might do it. I always fancy their cottages must be dirty, and I do not like to go into them. Sometimes you send Alice to take them medicines when they are ill; and I always admire her for going, for I am sure it would make me sick."

Mr. Russell. "I must tell you that such feelings are very wrong. They proceed from two causes; the want of a habit of self-denial, and the want of realising Scripture. You ought to be accustomed to do things that are rather disagreeable, not to mind looking at something not quite pleasant to the eyes, or touching something that you had rather not touch. It is very bad indeed to be so self-indulgent, that you can hardly bear to endure for five minutes the discomforts which your fellow-creatures endure all their lives. Are you not afraid of being like the rich man who went to hell, while the poor beggar went to heaven?"

Mary. "But I would not have refused to give Lazarus the crumbs he asked for."

Mr. Russell. "We are not told that the rich man refused. But supposing that he did, and that you in that one respect would have differed from him, do you think it would be sufficient charity to sit at a costly table and fare sumptu-

ously every day, and then to feed Christ with the crumbs which fall from your table?"

Mary. "To feed Christ! But it was Lazarus, not . . . . . Oh, now I recollect what you mean; it was Lazarus representing Christ. But it would be impossible to feel for a poor beggar as if it were really Christ."

Mr. Russell. "What should you do, supposing it were really Christ who was lying at your gate like Lazarus, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from your table?"

Mary. "I should be so astonished, I should hardly know what to do. I think I should be frightened."

Mr. Russell. "But when you had got over your astonishment and fright, what would you do? You, Fitzmaur, tell me what you would do."

Fitzmaur. "I think I should get something to bathe His sores. I should thank Him for condescending to come to my house instead of going somewhere else. Then I should beg of Him to come in and take the best place at my table, and I should help Him to all there was best on it: and I should certainly not venture to sit down unless He told me; I should stand behind Him and wait upon Him. This is what I fancy I should do; but I think I also should feel very frightened."

Mr. Russell. "Well, then, the difference between you and the Saints of God in old time is, that they took Christ at His word, and believed and felt, that when they did a kind office to the poor, He looked upon it as done to Himself. And that, of course, necessarily made them feel it a great privilege to help the poor, a great honour not to be thought lightly of. Then such feelings would give them a kind and even respectful manner towards the poor; not, indeed, so deferential as if it were literally to Christ they were ministering, but still a tender affectionate manner and tone in speaking, very unlike the tone which now-a-days people dare to use towards them. Nor would they presume to feel disgust, as if that which was good enough for their brethren, was not fit for them to touch."

Mary. "But would it be possible to do the same things now that were done then? I do not think mamma would allow us to wait upon poor people and wash their sores."

Mr. Russell. "I am not saying that it would be possible to do the same things that were done by those holy Saints; in some cases it might not be advisable. In your case, for instance, it would of course be very wrong to do any thing your parents disapproved of. But though it may not always be practicable to perform the

very same acts, it is possible for every one to cultivate the same spirit; and where that exists, acts of love are sure to follow, according to each man's capabilities. You should look forward to being able to do more for your suffering fellow-creatures at some future time than you are at present; and till then, you should at least think of them and speak to them with kindness. You should practise self-denial in your intercourse with them; check any feeling of disgust or aversion, that may arise, when you come into contact with a less degree of refinement than you are accustomed to; and when you relieve their wants, you should not only give what costs you nothing."

Fitzmaur. "Do you mean that we ought to give the poor what we want most ourselves?"

Mr. Russell. "Yes; I mean that if you wish the gift to be acceptable in God's sight, it must have exercised some little self-denial in bestowing it."

Edward. "But it does not make a thing more useful to the poor, does it, that we should have wanted it ourselves?"

Mr. Russell. "Certainly not; but, as I have often told you, the poor are only a channel, through which we offer to God of the good things He has given us. Almsgiving should be

a sort of act of worship; and if we forget this, and give to the poor from other motives than love to God, our gifts lose almost all their value."

Mary. "But surely sometimes an old dress, or a cheap one, would be much more useful to the poor than any thing very costly, would it not?"

Mr. Russell. "Yes. I do not mean that you ought to dress up the poor in silks or satins; but I mean that you should deny yourself the pleasure of buying something you wish for, to spend the money on the poor."

Mary. "Well, I will try to remember all this, and be more self-denying and charitable. I might often lay by some of my pocket-money for the poor, and buy fewer doll's things.

Mr. Russell. "This conversation reminds me, that I intended to give you and Fitzmaur a scolding for a fault you committed a few days ago. Do you recollect—I think it was last Monday—that a poor man came up to you with a piece of paper, which he begged of you to take to your mamma? You, Fitzmaur, were lying on the bank fishing at the time, and Lady Mary was standing by you."

Fitzmaur. "I recollect it perfectly."

Mr. Russell. "Why did you not take it to your mamma?"

Fitzmaur. "I hardly know why I did not. . . . . I think I was . . . . . You know papa does not much like beggars to come up to the house."

Mr. Russell. "Fie, fie, for making such a lame excuse! You know this man told you he came from the rectory, and that Lord de Courcy always makes an exception in favour of persons sent by me."

Fitzmaur. "I am afraid, then, that the honest reason was, that I did not like to get up and leave my fishing."

Mr. Russell. "And you, Lady Mary,—you were not fishing, so why did not you take the poor man's petition to your mamma?"

Mary. "I should not have minded the trouble, but the bit of paper looked so dirty, I did not like to touch it."

Mr. Russell. "So, one from indolence, and the other from that false refinement so unworthy of a follower of the lowly Virgin's Son, allowed this poor man, who had only just been discharged from the hospital and was very weak, to have a walk for nothing. Surely this great fault proceeded from the two causes I have named. If you had been in the daily habit of denying yourselves, of doing things which are disagreeable to you, do you think you would

have acted so selfishly on that occasion? Or would you, if you had realised the words of your Saviour, 'Inasmuch as you did it not unto one of the least of these My brethren, you did it not unto Me,' have so unkindly used Christ's representative—your brother for whom He died?"

Mary. "I do not quite understand what you mean by realising His words."

Mr. Russell. "Try to imagine this picture which I will describe to you. Fancy yourselves either occupied as you were the other day, or perhaps sitting at a well-furnished table enjoying a sumptuous repast. While so engaged a poor wandering MAN accosts you, and entreats you to give Him a little help. He tells you He is hungry and thirsty, and very weary, and prays you to give Him if it is only a little cold water. You look up at Him, and you see that He is very poor; He seems to have journeyed from a distance, for His naked feet are bleeding. He appears, moreover, to have some heavy sorrow at His heart besides His poverty, for the tears are rolling down His pale emaciated face; He seems to be deeply 'acquainted with grief.' The expression of His eyes is very gentle, yet, as He fixes them mournfully upon you, and solicits charity, you hardly like to meet their gaze, and so you turn away,—you 'hide as it were your

faces from Him.' Again He asks your pity, and you answer you have nothing for Him, and desire Him to go away. He tells you that He is a great way from His HOME, that the first night of His journey He slept in a stable, but that since that He has slept very little, for that in general 'He has not where to lay His head.' But you begin to be weary of His importunity, and desire Him sharply to go about His business; He must not enter your splendid apartment to rest Himself, because, you add, His feet might soil your carpet. So you bid Him go and speak to the servants if He has any thing to say. He fixes His sorrowful eyes upon you, to see if you will change your minds and give Him something, but you motion Him away, and the SUFFERER leaves your door. Your servants, who are idly lounging about, have seen you turn Him away, and so when the MAN asks them for relief, they speak roughly to Him, tell Him that strangers are not allowed to come up to the house, and threaten to drive Him away if He does not go instantly. So the SUFFERER is turned away from your inhospitable door; you, perhaps, feel uncomfortable for a moment when He again looks upon you, but you soon forget it, and never see the MAN again in this world. Now, my children, let us change the picture,

and, passing over intervening years, let us try to realise the Day of Judgment. Try to fancy the sound of that trumpet which shall wake the dead; imagine the whole creation standing before the awful throne, myriads from every nation. Imagine then your consternation, when you recognise in the Judge the MAN of SORROWS whom you turned away from your door. Those gentle eyes which then were fixed upon you, to see if haply the look which brought St. Peter to penitence might also melt your hearts, are now bent sternly upon yours; but you cannot, as you did then, 'hide your faces from Him.' And you hear again that Voice against which you steeled your souls, but the tone is no longer that of a Mourner, but that of an offended King, while the words He utters are, 'I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in; naked, and ye clothed Me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited Me not.' Now, my dear children, this is only a picture; but it is what I mean by realising the words of our Lord. When you have meditated in that way upon such a subject, I do not think you could act again as you did last Monday."

Mary. "No, indeed; indeed I am sure we never shall. I could almost cry at your story.

I did not consider all this before. I am sure I never, never will again think disdainfully of a poor person."

Fitzmaur. "Would it not be a good plan to lay-by some of our pocket-money every month, to give to poor people when they come in that way? For sometimes we spend it so fast, that towards the end of the month we have none left."

Mr. Russell. "It would be an excellent plan; in fact, it is what every one ought to do."

Edward. "I am ready; I'll lay-by half of mine."

Mr. Russell. "Half would be too much at first, the temptation to encroach upon it would be so very strong; and remember, when once it is laid-by, it must not be touched, it is God's property. I think a tenth part of your allowance should be appropriated to such purposes, because God has always decreed that the tithes, that is, the tenth part of every man's property, should be dedicated to Him. Then there is nothing to prevent your giving more than what you lay-by, if ever you have occasion; and if you get into the habit of self-denial, you will constantly find opportunities of doing some charitable office for another."

Edward. "A tenth seems very little."

Mr. Russell. "Try it to begin with; hitherto, it appears, you have laid-by nothing; it is bad to attempt too much at once. But as I told you, you may always give as much more as you please, only let a tenth be considered dedicated to God."

Fitzmaur. "I suppose we *must* learn to deny ourselves; is it very difficult? When shall we begin?"

Mr. Russell. "You will find it difficult at first; nay, there must always be some difficulty, or else it would not be self-denial. You had better begin to-day,—you could not begin on a more suitable day than this."

Mary. "Why is to-day suitable?"

Mr. Russell. "Because it is Friday; and Friday has always been set apart by Christians, from the days of the Apostles, for a little more self-denial than usual, for prayer and fasting."

Edward. "Fasting! Oh yes; that means not eating. Well, I should not mind fasting now and then; I could go without my dinner any day for something particular. Once I went without breakfast and dinner, to go out with uncle John, and I did not care."

Mr. Russell. "Well, then it was no self-denial. But children are not required, nay, not

permitted, to fast from food; they must learn to deny themselves in other things."

Fitzmaur. "Will you tell us some ways in which we ought to do it?"

Mr. Russell. "It depends a little upon your different dispositions. You, for instance, are rather inclined to be lazy;—suppose, then, you were to get up a little earlier in the morning; or suppose, when you are lounging in an arm-chair, and not much inclined to move, you were to jump up briskly, if you see any one looking for something, or going to open or shut the door, and do it for them; or give up a game of play, to learn a lesson which is more difficult than usual; or if you wish for one game, and your playfellows wish for another, yield the point to them. Then again, should a cross word be spoken to you, do not answer again; or if your parents forbid something you would like very much to have or to do, submit cheerfully. These are but a few among the many opportunities, which must occur to you every day, of exercising self-denial. Try to practise them; and do not, until you have at least attempted such first, endeavour to impose voluntary and more difficult sacrifices upon yourselves; that would be trying to run before you can walk."

Fitzmaur. "Well, we will indeed try; and

I suppose we had better begin to-day, by playing the civil to Miss Augusta."

Edward. "Alice, I hope you find it a great self-denial to go and physic Mary Cullen, instead of coming with us to the castle."

Alice. "Of course, I had always rather be with you."

Mr. Russell. "Now, my dear children, you must return home; for it is getting late, and I have a great deal to do."

Mary. "I do believe you have been practising great self-denial all this time in talking to us, instead of doing something else."

Mr. Russell. "On the contrary, my self-denial is now, in breaking up so pleasant a party to attend to my duties."

The conversation ended thus. In a few minutes the rector was again deeply engaged in his seemingly endless labours; little Alice, with her basket on her arm, was trudging through the village; and the three Fitzmaurs were slowly returning to the castle, discussing the subject of their late conversation. Innumerable were the resolutions they made for exercising the virtue which had just been enforced upon them. There was scarcely any thing that they did not propose to do. They could not, moreover, bring themselves to believe that self-denial was really

so difficult as Mr. Russell had told them. They thought nothing could be easier than to refuse to do a pleasant thing and give it up to another; and there was a little degree of heroism in it that pleased their fancies. All this was very natural, and so far as it went very right; but they had committed an error which is common to all young beginners, — that of mistaking the enthusiasm of the moment for strength of resolution, and of supposing that all these high resolves could be practised in their own strength. They had yet to learn that every resolution must be made an act of prayer, before it can avail any thing. Nevertheless, it was a great point that they should be so willing to be taught, and to act upon the instructions they received.

"It is clear that we must be very kind to Augusta," said Mary, as they reached the castle-gates; and this seemed to be the climax of self-denial in their eyes.

It will perhaps be advisable briefly to state who this Augusta was, that has been introduced to our notice so very disadvantageously. Her father was Lord De Courcy's youngest brother, Lord Charles Fitzmaur. Not being rich, he had married the daughter of a very wealthy merchant, who brought him an immense fortune in return for what he bestowed upon her, a title.

All this fortune was eventually to become Augusta's, and some allowance must be made for the poor child's numerous faults; as many stronger heads than that of a girl of twelve years old have failed in being proof against the temptations incident to the name and position of an heiress. It would have been better not to have informed her of her future wealth, until her mind had been disciplined to look upon riches only in the light of an increased means of doing good, and so bringing with them an additional weight of responsibility. But she had contrived to get possession of the fact; and like many other silly children, she thought it a very fine thing, and fancied herself rather an important personage. In this she was terribly mistaken; for a child, whatever its future prospects may be, is, for the time present (which is all any one can be sure of), a helpless, useless being, and only important when viewed in the light of a baptised Christian; which view Augusta must have forgotten sometimes, when she thought so much of the pomps and vanities she had promised to renounce. Perhaps if her father, Lord Charles, had lived, she would have been wiser; for he was not a man who would tolerate whims and fancies. But she had lost him at four years of age; and her mother was too indulgent. Lady Charles thought a great

deal too much about rank, probably because she was not used to it; for when people are born into it, unless they have very ill-regulated minds, it is not easy to see why they should be always thinking about it, any more than they are constantly thinking of the colour of their hair or eyes. At all events, it looks as if rank fitted ill upon a person, when he is perpetually conscious of its existence.

Lord De Courcy had tenderly loved his brother Charles, and for his sake he shewed unremitting kindness to his widow and orphan. He was not blind to Augusta's faults, and almost the only stern reprimands she ever received were from him. It was commonly thought that she was afraid of him; but she was his guest, and his brother's child; and so, somehow or other, she generally got off cheap. Once, when her governess had complained that it was impossible to make her attend to her studies, Lord De Courcy spoke to Lady Charles of the necessity of enforcing more application and docility. The latter made answer: "Poor child, I do not like worrying her; and a girl of her pretensions is sure to get on without much learning. I do not think it is generally the most learned women that are the most admired." Seeing her brother-in-law look grave, she laid her hand upon his arm, and

said, smiling: "Do you not think that, with your brother's blood and good looks, and with my fortune, she will do very well?"

Lord De Courcy looked at her for a minute, as if to understand what she said; then shrugged his shoulders, and walked off whistling. The subject was not renewed.

My young readers will perhaps be curious to know how our little heroes spent their day, and whether they overcame their difficulties, and were very accommodating to their cousin. The result of one day's trial will be best given in the short conversation which took place in the evening, after they had all retired to their rooms. The two boys generally remained chatting in Mary's room, while her maid (who, being French, could not understand them) went through the tedious ceremony attendant on *papillotes*. This evening the following conversation passed among them:

"Well, Fitzmaur," said Mary, "we really have been very self-denying to-day."

"Oh yes," cried both the boys.

"But I must say," added Fitzmaur, "I do not think Augusta has been quite so bad to-day. I almost think she is improved."

"No, indeed she is not," returned Edward; "it is only because we have been yielding our-

selves, that it has appeared so to us; how very ill-tempered she was because she dropped her comb, and we could not find it immediately; and we certainly did take great trouble in looking for it."

"Yes, and how resolved she was to have my doll," said Mary; "I thought of Mr. Russell, and let her keep it; or else I was very near taking it away. And you cannot think how disagreeable she was at dressing-time."

"Besides," said Fitzmaur, "I really think Aunt Charles is sometimes quite as tiresome as Augusta; but I would do any thing, and put up with any thing, to please Mr. Russell. Otherwise it is a great bore when people can do nothing for themselves, but must always be so much waited upon."

"I wish Mr. Russell knew how much we have tried to please him," said Edward.

"I am afraid he would think us boasting," replied Mary.

"Oh no," returned her brother, "he could not and would not think so. What is the use of trying to please people, if they know nothing about it? I wish he knew; for we really have been thinking of it all day."

"Could we not write to him?" asked Fitzmaur.

"An excellent idea!" said both the others; "but how should we send him the letter?"

"It is very early," he answered, "only a little past nine o'clock; I could easily run down and tell John to take it to the Rectory, and wait for an answer: he would not be more than half an hour about it."

"Agreed, agreed!" cried all; "we will do it at once."

The last curl-paper was finished by the time that the sheet of paper was procured and the lines ruled. Mary, being the neatest scribe, was deputed to write it, and Fitzmaur, being the best grammarian, to dictate it. Edward, who never could hold a pen or spell, sat picking the buttons off his coat. The following was the joint production:—

"VERY DEAR AND KIND SIR,

"You cannot think how much we have tried all day to please you; we have been *so* self-denying. It is really much easier than you think. We have remembered it all through the day. Augusta and Aunt Charles have sometimes bored us; but we have not cared, as it was to please you. We shall soon be ready to do difficult things, like the good people you told us of. Do not think we are boasting, we are only very anxious you should know how much we have

thought of doing as you wished. We will always be very good, for we love you dearly, and are

"Your affectionate children,

"FITZMAUR.
"MARY FITZMAUR.
"EDWARD FITZMAUR.

"P.S. I jumped up three times to fetch Aunt Charles her bag (she never can recollect where she leaves it); once I was just going to eat a very ripe peach, which by the time I came back Augusta had finished; and another time I was fishing, and lost a fine fish by it. But I did not mind, as it was to please you.

"Your affectionate
"FITZMAUR.

"I wished particularly to wear my new silk frock to-night, but Augusta had not one so pretty, and did not like to be less smart than I was, so I gave it up, and wore my common one to please you.

"Your affectionate
"MARY.

"Augusta called me a fool, and I did *not* give her a box on the ear: I am sure mine was the greatest self-denial of all.

"Your affectionate
"EDWARD."

This curious production, with its three post-

scripts, was duly finished, sealed, and despatched; and in less than an hour the following answer was returned. The boys had sat up to wait for it, and took it to read to their sister, who was in bed.

"MY DEAREST CHILDREN,

"I thank you sincerely for your kindness and affectionate endeavours to please me: you have made a good beginning; now persevere. But take care, my little friends, not to be *too confident* in yourselves. Moreover, you must act upon a higher motive than that of pleasing me: do not forget the subject when you say your prayers to-night. Persevere, and you will succeed, even should you find it a little more difficult than you now imagine. God bless you, my children. I remain always

"Your affectionate friend and pastor,

"W. RUSSELL."

"How delightful!" exclaimed they all; "I was sure he would be pleased. How hard we will try to-morrow! And we shall have Alice, which will make it easier. Dear, good Mr. Russell!"

In another half hour the innocent children were asleep.

CHAPTER III.

THE TRIAL.

PERHAPS some of my readers will be disposed to laugh at the letter transcribed in the preceding chapter, and to think its writers peculiarly hasty in judging favourably of themselves. But this was not the case: it was not vanity that made Mary and her brothers feel so secure of success; it was a very natural mistake, into which all, young or old, but especially the young, are liable to fall. And that letter was but a simple effusion of their enthusiasm; they wrote just as they felt; there was no hypocrisy in their professions: and probably any one who honestly examines his conscience, will find something of the same in his own experience. When first we resolve to practise some particular virtue, and make certain rules for ourselves accordingly, we set out with an enthusiasm disproportioned to our strength; and then we relax: that is to say, we are so eager at first, that we fancy we can do more than we really can; and

then afterwards, finding our mistake, we are discouraged, and take no pains. It is like when one rolls a ball with a violent jerk: it will roll on for some time very fast, then it will gradually get slower, and at last stop. Now, the error in this is the supposing that one resolution and effort will suffice. One jerk will set off the ball rolling; but to keep it going on, we must continue to push it; and if we cease the exertion, the ball will stop too. So it is with ourselves: our efforts and exertions must be unceasing; for it is a mistake to suppose that duty will ever become so easy as not to require an effort to act up to it.

But I remember, of old, thinking it very unfair to be cheated into a sermon when I expected a story; so I will return to Fitzmaur Castle, feeling sure that my young readers will kindly accept these few hints, and that they are quite able to form their own reflections upon the incidents I record.

A few weeks before the time we are now speaking of, Alice had accidentally asked Mary if she would let her have a ride on her pony; and Mr. Russell had seconded the request by saying that he should very much like his little daughter to ride, as she used to do a previous year. Mary had then answered, with real re-

gret, that her pony had been lame for some time, so that her own rides had been quite stopped. She did not much care about riding herself, but she was very sorry that Alice should be disappointed, for it was her favourite exercise; and having no horse of her own, her only opportunity was by using Mary's. The boys had each a very pretty pony; but neither had ever been trained to carry a lady; so the thing being out of the question, Alice had thought no more about it from that day. But Fitzmaur had pondered over the matter, and had come to the conclusion, that there was no reason why his pony should not be trained and exercised to bear the slight irritation of a petticoat, and that then it would do for Alice admirably; for it was a gentle creature, that knew its own name, and would eat from their hands. Alice had often fed it herself, and was very fond of it: it was a pretty animal, jet-black, with a flowing tail and mane.

Edward's pony Fitzmaur knew to be much too mettlesome for a little girl; but his own was so very gentle, why should it not do? He had forthwith opened his mind to the coachman, the only servant who was trusted to accompany the children in their rides, and who had often declared that he would go through fire and water for his young lord.

The coachman had only to hear Fitzmaur's wish, to promise that it should be fulfilled; and he instantly engaged to exercise the pony himself, and to make it fit for the most timid lady in a very short time; adding, "Miss Alice is a likesome little lady, so gentle-spoken, and sits well on horseback; though, to be sure, she is not to be compared with Lady Mary."

"Mary shall have a ride too, if she likes," replied Fitzmaur; "but I should like Alice to have the first, and I will ride Edward's pony to accompany her."

"Your lordship may depend upon my having the pony ready for you in no time," answered the favourite servant; and he faithfully kept his word.

Day after day Fitzmaur inquired after his pony, and sometimes accompanied the coachman while he exercised it. The gentle creature soon learned to bear the petticoat; and its young master looked at it with double pleasure as it stood pawing the ground, conscious of admiration, with white reins and trappings, contrasting brightly with its black skin.

The day following that of the conversation at the Rectory was the one which Fitzmaur had fixed upon for Alice's first ride. He had settled this with the coachman some time previously; and

accordingly, when Alice came that morning, he told her of his plan in great glee; and it was agreed that the ride should take place in the afternoon, as being cooler, and that Mary and Edward should play with Augusta in the mean while. Nothing could be pleasanter: Alice was delighted and grateful, and Fitzmaur was happy to see her so; and Mary was always pleased when her eldest brother, whom she tenderly loved, was happy. Altogether, there could not be a merrier party: they jumped about for joy, and were in high good-humour by the time Augusta joined them for a game of play. It must be admitted that it was very thoughtful and amiable of Fitzmaur to have taken so much pains to gratify his little friend.

The children's dinner was the luncheon of the grown people; and it was generally the rendezvous of all the neighbourhood, who dropped in at that time to chat together and pay their respects to Lady De Courcy. Every passer-by was sure to be a welcome guest at Fitzmaur Castle. The most constant visitor was Mrs. Dawson; but the dearest and most welcome of all was the one who was seldom able to join the party, Mr. Russell.

This day Fitzmaur particularly wished that the rector should come: it would be so pleasant

to shew him how his least wish was consulted; besides, it would be a real pleasure to himself to see his little girl enjoying herself; and Alice would be sure to like her ride better than ever, if her father had placed her on her horse. So he could not help whispering to Alice, "How I wish your father would *just happen* to look in at luncheon-time to-day!—do you think there is a chance of his doing so?"

"I am afraid not," she replied; "he is at home now, and is not going out till late: then I think he means to pay a round of visits."

"I wish he would come to us on his way," returned Fitzmaur.

Alice thought within herself, "How pleasant it would be to do something for Fitzmaur, when he has been so very kind to me! I have a mind to go back, and see if I cannot coax my father to come to the Castle to-day."

No sooner thought, than the little maiden was off, and in a short time was seated on her father's knee, forcibly interrupting his occupations.

"Father, I wish you would come to the Castle to-day: *do, pray,* just indulge us this once!"

"Why am I wanted so much to-day?"

"Oh, that you will see, if you will but come: you are *particularly* wanted."

"But who wants me?"

"Every body."

"I have been with Lord De Courcy two days this week already, and each day for a long time together: that is a good deal of time to give to one parishioner, when I have so many, is it not?"

"Yes; but pray come, dear, dear father! It is not exactly Lord De Courcy who wants you most. But you *will* come,—will you not?"

"Well, I will see if it be possible for me to do so: perhaps, if I am not interrupted, I may be able to go out earlier than I intended; so, to give me more time, you must be off, my little one."

"Thank you, dear father!—now you shall have such a kiss!"

"But mind, I do not promise—I only say I will if I can."

Another most affectionate caress, and the little girl was retracing her steps to the Castle.

So far every thing appeared bright and prosperous for Fitzmaur. He had not mentioned his little plan to his parents, because he thought to surprise them too after luncheon; and as they always left him the disposal of his own pony, there was no necessity for his asking their leave. What made Fitzmaur in particularly high good-humour on this occasion was, that he felt as if

he had done a very good-natured thing, and that his parents and Mr. Russell would be pleased with him accordingly. Not that he either expected or wished to be praised; but he thought he should win their approbation, which he prized dearly. This was a very natural feeling, and a very right one; for the approbation of those set over us should always be highly esteemed, and to wish for that is very different from seeking admiration or flattery.

But there is one little circumstance that should not escape your attention, young reader, though perhaps it escaped Fitzmaur's; which is, that there is no great merit in an act of kindness which costs the bestower nothing. If, for instance, Fitzmaur had procured this pleasure for Alice, or for any one else, at the expense of some pleasure of his own, it would have been a very commendable act; but on this occasion he was giving himself as great a treat as he was giving Alice. Do not for a moment think this means, that he was wrong in taking pleasure in the plan he had proposed: far from it; he could not do otherwise; only a kindness to a fellow-creature is not an act of virtue unless it costs us something: when it costs us nothing, it is merely one of those every-day duties which it would be absolutely wrong to omit. Self-

denial is the touchstone of every virtue; and many persons will be found unable to bear that test, who nevertheless appear very kind and amiable in every-day life.

The party at luncheon comprised several of the neighbours, including Mrs. Dawson. The conversation having taken first the ordinary turns of the weather and politics, a fresh subject was started.

"How pleasant it would be," said Lady De Courcy, "to walk after luncheon to the waterfall! it is so cool and shady; and you, Lady Charles, could finish that sketch of the ruined tower on the hill."

"Nothing could be pleasanter," returned the lady: "will Lord De Courcy and the other gentlemen be of the party?"

"Certainly," they all replied; and Lord De Courcy added, "there shall be the carriage for those who like to use it; but the distance is so short, that probably every one will prefer walking such a fine day."

Most of the party agreed that walking would be the most agreeable; but Lady Charles Fitzmaur added, "I shall wish my Augusta to drive, for she has had a cold lately; therefore I should not like her to wet her feet, and it is always very damp near the waterfall."

"Oh, no, mamma!" exclaimed Augusta; "I shall not at all like to be in the carriage while every body else is walking, I shall be so dull."

"Then I will drive with you, if you like," said Mary.

"But I do not like driving at all," returned Augusta, "because the carriage cannot go up so close as one can walk, nor through those pretty little winding paths."

"But, my darling," said her mother, "I am so afraid of your wetting your feet; you would not like to be laid up with a cold, and not able to play with your cousins."

"I wish," said Lady De Courcy, "that Mary's pony was not lame; she then should ride with the boys, while the rest walk."

"Oh, yes; and she is so fond of riding," returned Lady Charles; "and the poor dear child has not had a ride for a long while."

"Well, I almost think I can satisfy all parties," said Lord De Courcy, in whom the desire to indulge his brother's child was always uppermost, "for I have seen the coachman exercising Fitzmaur's pony with a side-saddle for some days past. I asked him yesterday if it was fit for a lady, and he told me it was perfectly so."

Poor Fitzmaur looked very blank: "Not to-day, papa!" he almost involuntarily exclaimed.

"Why not to-day?" was Lord De Courcy's most natural question.

"Oh, pray, not to-day," replied Fitzmaur; "I had intended Alice to ride to-day, and to accompany her myself."

"But I daresay Alice will willingly walk to-day, and ride another day, since it is an object to prevent Augusta wetting her feet."

This was partly addressed to Alice by Lord De Courcy.

"Oh, certainly," replied the little girl, who thought the case did not admit of hesitation; but unfortunately an appealing look from Fitzmaur checked her ready sacrifice. She thought he considered her ungrateful; and without reflecting upon the impression of herself that a refusal might create, she instantly added, "except that I think I should like . . . . I think Fitzmaur particularly wishes me to ride to-day."

This was unlucky; for as no one knew the circumstances, it was impossible but that Alice's speech should be attributed to selfishness; whereas, poor little thing, she was willing to please all parties, only she could not bear to be ungrateful to Fitzmaur, who had done all for her. Consequently, when he began a vehement explanation to his father, of the injustice of depriving her of the ride which had been pro-

mised her, and of lending his pony to Augusta against his will, Alice, instead of remonstrating with Fitzmaur, and offering to yield the point, as she would otherwise have done, kept silence, and looked very miserable.

"This is most extraordinary!" exclaimed Lord De Courcy; then turning to his son, he added, "I would have you know, young gentleman, that I expect my will to be law in this house; and if I choose Augusta should ride, you will not presume to make any objection;" then softening his tone, he continued with stiff politeness, "I should have thought that, under the circumstances, Miss Russell would have seen the propriety of foregoing the pleasure for one day."

Miss Russell! Alice hardly knew herself by that name. She was little Alice all over the neighbourhood; the very cottagers called her nothing else. She saw Lord De Courcy was wronging her, and she longed to explain; but another glance at Fitzmaur silenced her. She saw the rich glow of his complexion deepening every minute, and the veins of his ample forehead swelling with suppressed emotion. What could she do? Poor Alice! she was thoroughly scared, and sat looking from one to the other without speaking. Of course this silence was misinterpreted, which gave Mrs. Dawson the

opportunity of edging in one of her well-bred remarks:

"That comes of putting people so much out of their places; I never thought such a great intimacy between these children could come to any good. But who would have imagined that little Alice would have wished to take precedence of Lady Charles Fitzmaur's daughter?"

Like most of Mrs. Dawson's remarks, this fell flat; to Alice it was Greek, for the words "precedence," &c. had rarely been heard in the well-bred circle of Fitzmaur Castle; and Lady De Courcy, to whom it was addressed, without any affectation, did not understand its allusion; so she merely answered, "Yes, Alice is in general so very obliging, I wonder at her not being willing to give up."

But in the meanwhile Augusta, the unfortunate cause of all this misunderstanding, was feeling extremely hurt at what appeared to her an unwillingness on the part of her cousins to give her a pleasure. And we must not be too hasty in blaming her on this occasion, for she knew nothing of this preconceived project of Fitzmaur's; perhaps, if she had, she might have withdrawn her claims, at least no one has a right to say she would not have done so. Nothing had been said about a ride for Alice until after

hers had been proposed, so she only saw in it a preference for Alice above herself, and she felt jealous and hurt. She muttered in a displeased tone: "It is very hard that my cousins are so much fonder of Alice than of me; they never like doing any thing for me."

"What a shame!" exclaimed the other three unanimously; "what a very great shame! when we have been so very self-denying to you."

"Self-denying!" repeated Lady Charles, "self-denying! what, in the name of wonder, do the children mean? I am sorry it requires so much self-denial to be kind to my little girl. Come to me, my poor Augusta."

Lord De Courcy's anger was now raised to a high pitch. Rudeness to a guest was, in his eyes, a capital offence; and in all this affair he only perceived incivility to his brother's child. It was altogether an unfortunate *contre-temps*—one of those which will often happen in real life, and which nothing will rectify but extreme good-humour and cheerful compliance on all sides. Poor Fitzmaur was not just now in a very complying mood; he fancied himself wronged, and unjustly used; and this made him the more resolute to have his own way. He stood at a distance from the rest, leaning against

a pillar, looking very red and very determined. Alice was terribly at a loss what to do; at last, thinking the best way would be to speak at once to Fitzmaur, and urge him to give up, she slipped off her chair, and gliding up to the spot where he stood, she whispered:

"Dear Fitzmaur, do not mind me; I do not care about it in the least."

"Do you mean," asked Fitzmaur, "that you do not wish to ride?"

"No, not to-day," she replied, thinking that would set all right.

But Fitzmaur had allowed his temper to get the better of him, and now he could not bear even so slight a contradiction; so it did not set all right. "I think it is very unkind of you, Alice, when I have had all this worry for you, and have been trying to get you this pleasure these last three weeks, to throw me overboard now that everybody is against me."

"Throw you overboard!" exclaimed Alice; "oh, no, indeed I would not do that; I do not wish any one to know that I have declined riding, but that you should give up the point, as if it was all your own doing."

"I will not!" answered Fitzmaur, getting very angry; "Augusta may just as well go in the carriage. The pony is mine, and I will lend

it to whoever I please. I will not have my plan spoiled by that tiresome little . . . ."

" Oh, hush!" said Alice, " pray do not call her names,—think a moment; do you not remember . . . ."

" Remember what?" asked Fitzmaur.

" Do you not remember," said Alice, colouring and hesitating, " yesterday . . . . about my father . . . ."

" What about your father?" interrupted he; " I only remember that I have been trying to please your father's daughter, and she cares very little about it."

To this Alice made no reply; but her eyes filled with tears.

" Tell me," he said, more gently,—" answer this one question simply; should you, so far as you are concerned, like to ride to-day?"

" Yes, of course," she answered; " so far as I am concerned, I should like it extremely; but" . . . .

The little conference was interrupted by Lord De Courcy calling out, from the other end of the room, " Do not stand parleying there, Fitzmaur; answer at once; do you choose to submit as you ought to do, and order round the pony for your cousin, or am I to order it? in

which case, I promise you, I will make you repent of your obstinacy."

Fitzmaur, after a moment's pause, sulkily answered, "I will have nothing to do with it; if I order the pony, it will be for Alice."

Lord De Courcy was now justly angry; and was about to pronounce a severe punishment upon his son, when Mrs. Dawson checked him, by saying, "I hope your lordship will not be too severe upon the dear boy; I am sure it is not quite his fault."

"How do you mean, madam," asked Lord De Courcy, "that when a boy flatly disobeys his father, it is not his fault?"

"I am sure," replied the above-named lady, "that Lord Fitzmaur was just going to give up, —you see he went aside to think about it; but Alice Russell went to coax him into standing up for her."

"I do not think Alice did that," said Lord De Courcy, "it would be so unlike her."

"I am not so sure of that," said Mrs. Dawson; "I have always thought an undue fuss was made about that child's goodness. In my opinion, Mr. Russell brings her up very injudiciously; there is such a mixture of severity and indulgence in his system; the one must make

her wayward, the other deceitful. My ideas of education are very different; indeed, I have ventured to hint as much to Mr. Russell, but he always seems to think he knows best."

"Indeed!" answered Lord De Courcy, with an arch smile, "you surprise me!"

"Yes, truly," continued the lady; "one would imagine that, having lost his wife, he would be glad that any one should take a motherly interest in his daughter; but he has such strange notions about a clergyman being the fittest person for every thing. Now, my system of education . . . ."

Fortunately for Lord De Courcy, who was too polite to interrupt a lady, he was spared the threatened essay on education, by Mrs. Dawson's attention being suddenly called off to Edward, who was talking very loud, and seemed to be in a great passion. In passing a glass of water to his cousin, he had muttered, "I wish it might choke you." Of course, he did not mean what he said; but he was so angry at his brother's disappointment, that he gave vent to it in those foolish words. Augusta had heard them, and repeated them to Lady De Courcy, who was, of course, extremely displeased with her son; and added, that she never saw her two boys so naughty. This provoked Edward very

much; and high words rose between him and Augusta, which, when his father heard, brought him a severe reprimand.

Every thing thus seemed to be going wrong. Mary could never see her brothers in trouble without crying, and by this time she was completely upset. Augusta, too, looked very uncomfortable and dissatisfied — she felt really sorry at finding herself the cause of so much annoyance; and this, added to the mortification of thinking her cousins slighted her, made her by no means the happiest of the party, though she was the one who was to be indulged. As for Edward, who could rarely keep his temper under any contradiction, he was now fairly in a passion, and presumed to mutter that his father's treatment of his brother was most unjust. Alice, though the only blameless one, was perhaps the most distressed of all; and she and her three friends stood in the recess of the window talking over their grievances. Such was the present position of the little party, who had begun the day so merrily. A cloud had gathered over the sun which had shone so brightly in the morning, and which now could not shine again till the cloud had been wept away.

But from whence had this cloud gathered? There may be, perhaps, a slight difficulty in

drawing a line between what was harmless, and what was blamable in the conduct of our heroes. Was it not very natural, that Fitzmaur should feel disappointed at finding his day's pleasure spoilt? Quite natural and innocent. But was it not equally natural, that Augusta should wish to ride since she did not like driving? Quite natural; and as she knew nothing of the pre-arrangement, it was not altogether her fault. Moreover, Edward could not surely be blamed for feeling hurt at his brother's disappointment—it was even affectionate. Assuredly; but still it was natural, that Augusta should be displeased at his uncivil wish that the water might choke her. Altogether then, perhaps, it may be difficult to determine where the fault lay. Where, it may be asked, is the remedy for all these troubles? or what could have prevented them? *Self-denial* would have prevented all. Self-denial would have induced Fitzmaur, though disappointed, to give up his pleasure to another; particularly, having ascertained that Alice was quite willing to do so. On the other hand, it would have made Augusta, when she perceived the disappointment she was causing, cheerfully change her desire for a ride into a readiness to drive. Self-denial, too, would have made Edward restrain his tongue; or had he, by mishap,

uttered the unguarded words, self-denial would have prevailed upon Augusta to take no notice of them. See what a magic effect self-denial would have in the little occurrences of every day! With it, life would be like a fairy-tale—it would change gloomy colours into bright ones.

But in the mean while an animated discussion was going on at the other end of the room, among the elder portion of the company. Lady De Courcy was always unhappy when her eldest boy, the pride of her heart, had displeased his father; and Mrs. Dawson was most eloquently consoling her,—assuring her that, "Upon my word, madam, I do not think the dear children are so much to blame—I do not, upon my word. But I would venture to advise your ladyship"—here she lowered her voice to a confidential key —"to look a little into Alice Russell's education, before you allow so great an intimacy between her and your charming family; and partly for her sake, poor little thing; for it would really be a pity, you know, if she was to presume upon your ladyship's kindness. Then Lady Mary's manners are so perfect, it would be a pity to have them injured! and I know that Alice is left very much to the servants; indeed, she must necessarily be so, as Mr. Russell is out all day."

Here Lady Charles Fitzmaur added, "I

must say, I should be sorry to have my Augusta's manners spoiled; though, to be sure, a girl with her expectations need not be so particular."

"Certainly, madam," responded Mrs. Dawson, "your ladyship's observation is very just." Then turning to Lord De Courcy, whose attention was arrested, "I can easily understand that it is a delicate matter for your lordship to say a word, as Mr. Russell is such a friend; but if I could be of the slightest service, I need not assure your lordship, or your ladyship, how happy I should feel to be at your commands; you have only to name your wishes. I am used to talk these matters over with Mr. Russell, as he generally consults me about the schools of his parish."

A smile of incredulity passed over Lord De Courcy's features; but he merely replied, that he, too, was perfectly well accustomed to speak to Mr. Russell; but that on the present occasion he had nothing particular to say, therefore he should decline Mrs. Dawson's kind offer. The fact was, Lord De Courcy naturally thought, that the man, to whom the bishop had entrusted the care of seven hundred souls, might be competent to bring up a little girl of ten years old.

Lady De Courcy having now withdrawn to

put on her bonnet, Mrs. Dawson drew her chair close to Lady Charles; and began talking in a mysterious whisper, though the subject-matter of discourse was nothing more than the fashionable shape of Miss Augusta's frock: upon which Lady Charles instantly told its price, with the name of the dressmaker and her terms; adding, that as expense was no consideration, she thought it better always to employ the best. Poor Mrs. Dawson! how much she would have to talk about among her acquaintance that day, respecting her confidential communications with Lady De Courcy; prefacing each piece of intelligence with, "Lady De Courcy and I are of opinion".... or, "Lady Charles Fitzmaur told me in confidence" .... &c.

But had Mrs. Dawson any dislike to her clergyman? Not exactly; but he had once offended her in a most tender point, and she found it difficult to forget it. Mrs. Dawson was a lady of a small independent fortune, who, having married late in life, had carried with her into the married state some of those peculiarities of disposition which are supposed to belong to the unmarried. Having nothing to do, she was always extremely busy; and having no children of her own, she was filled with a philanthropic taste for educating those of her neighbours. She was

very fond of being *useful*, and still fonder of being *thought* useful; and in pursuance of this her taste, she at one time took a lively interest in the schools of the parish, and in visiting the poor people. She gave herself out to be "quite Mr. Russell's right hand;" but as she never in any way referred for direction to the reputed owner of the said limb, Mr. Russell began to experience the inconvenience attending so literal an ignorance of what his right hand was doing. For instance, on one occasion he had ordered a boy in the school to be flogged for telling a lie: Mrs. Dawson happening to enter the school some time after, with the purpose of doing a great deal of good, with a bundle from the Religious Tract Society under her arm, insisted that the punishment should be remitted, undertaking at once to convince the "young sinner of the error of his ways." The schoolmaster, supposing of course that she came vested with the clergyman's authority, though much surprised, complied. Mrs. Dawson then added, "it is so much better, when one can, to allure the young soul from the path of destruction than to drive it." The schoolmaster scratched his head and stared. The benevolent lady then selected from her bundle of tracts one, at least seventy pages long, which she read out at length to the yawning cul-

prit; the drift of which was, first, the dreadful punishments annexed to telling falsehoods; secondly, the utter incapability in children, even baptised children, to speak the truth, and the consequent hopeless condition of all, whether baptised or not, unless they felt a certain assurance of salvation, in which case they were safe; thirdly, that all, whether they told truth or lies, were equally sinners in the sight of God, and that heinous as was the sin of falsehood, those who committed it were not in such danger as those who thought to win God's favour by speaking the truth, or any other righteous act. The best part of this edifying discourse, and the only antidote to its poison, was, that no one understood it; and should the philanthropic lover of justice be distressed to think that the naughty boy lost his flogging, let him know to his satisfaction that the urchin did *not* escape with impunity, inasmuch as he was heard to mutter, as he returned gaping and rubbing his eyes: "I would rather have had the flogging by half; it would have been over so much quicker."

It will not excite surprise, that Mr. Russell was annoyed and displeased when he heard of this interference; and having firmly but gently expostulated with Mrs. Dawson, he gave peremptory orders to the schoolmaster to receive

no commands but from himself, or in a direct message from himself. The lady never quite forgave this downfal of her dignity and influence.

This is but one among many instances of Mrs. Dawson's method of doing good; a method differing materially from that pointed out by Mr. Russell in the preceding chapter. Sometimes her interference had more serious consequences. One of her favourite methods of doing good (or what she thought was doing good), was by distributing tracts among the poor, the selection of which she kept entirely in her own hands. Of course, the circulation of tracts or other religious publications among the poor is calculated to be very useful, provided great care is taken in selecting good ones; but surely some reference should be made to the clergyman of the parish, who is, after all, the only responsible person. Mr. Russell had often told Mrs. Dawson plainly, that he did not like some of the tracts she gave, and had begged of her to allow him to assist her in the selection of them; but this she had resented as a disparagement to her "*views*." In vain he represented to her that it was more dangerous to tamper with the soul than with the body; and that as no one would think of giving quack medicines of his own choos-

ing to a patient under a physician's care, so surely some reference should be made to the spiritual physician: Mrs. Dawson was not to be vanquished. She seemed to look upon her tracts as sovereign remedies for all diseases, whether of mind or body; for whether the person she visited happened to be old or young, in health or in sickness, or even dying, she had a tract adapted to each circumstance.

Let it not for a moment be supposed that, in recording these facts respecting Mrs. Dawson, it is intended to ridicule or to disparage the works of piety of any persons. God only can read the heart, and a holy motive may often in His eyes palliate error of judgment. But as so much has already been said upon the duty of attending to the poor, it seemed advisable to point out the disadvantages resulting from too much independence in the act of performing this duty. For in ministering to the poor, as in every thing else, there is a right and a wrong way.

Such, however, was the lady who took so warm an interest in the education of Alice Russell. My readers will pardon this digression, for there being a pause in the general conversation in the luncheon-room, I thought it a good opportunity to introduce Mrs. Dawson; but we will now return to the little party in the window-recess.

Their voices were silent; Edward had exhausted his powers of eloquence, and the others were too unhappy to speak; when all of a sudden Alice exclaimed: "There is my father!" It was too true; in compliance with the wishes of his daughter and her little friends, Mr. Russell had contrived to spare an hour for Fitzmaur Castle, and now he was walking along the approach, expecting to be greeted by happy, merry little faces. It may be imagined how much the sight of him redoubled Fitzmaur's grief and disappointment. How different was his position from that, in which he had so much wished his kind friend to peep at him! He had prepared a joyful surprise for him: how different would be the scene into which he would enter! Yet something within him assured Fitzmaur, that the disappointment of seeing another enjoying a ride, instead of his own daughter, was the part of the affair that would the least distress Mr. Russell. Alice, too, felt very much annoyed, though she could not but be gratified at her father's kind compliance with her request; but yet how much she wished she had not made any such request! She was almost tempted to run up to him, and ask him to go back; but that would have been too unreasonable. She looked at her companions, first at one, then at the

other, in great consternation; any one would have thought that she was the offender.

"How very unfortunate!" exclaimed Mary; "I shall be so ashamed of Mr. Russell's seeing us all now."

"Yes; and after our letters last night," said Edward, "he will think we have been humbugging him."

Fitzmaur did not dare to speak; he was too much afraid of crying—a weakness he was always ashamed to indulge.

Meanwhile Mr. Russell had reached the house and entered the room, where he was warmly greeted by all except his younger friends, who did not venture out of their retreat in the window. One glance of his keen eye into their little group convinced him that all was not right there; but he took no further notice. In a few minutes he and Lord De Courcy left the room together; and then the latter briefly told him what had passed, adding, "I am afraid your little Alice was not quite so good as usual; she did not seem disposed to give up. Of course, under no other circumstances would I have disappointed her; but Augusta having been rather indisposed lately . . . ."

"Oh, certainly; pray do not think it necessary to explain your reasons," said the clergy-

man, looking very much distressed; "I am quite surprised that Alice . . . . really, it is very unusual in her . . . ."

"Well, do not look so very downcast about it," said Lord De Courcy, laughing; "we cannot have perfection at ten years old: I ought to be the more disconsolate parent of the two; for there my boy has been bullying me for the last hour."

The horses and carriages now came round to the door; Fitzmaur's beautiful pony, in its gay white trappings, with a side-saddle for Augusta, and Edward's for him to escort her.

Fitzmaur's pony was called Prince; and it was so tame, that it would answer to its name. It was in particularly high spirits that afternoon, and came prancing up to the door in a way that made Augusta feel rather timid. It would hardly stand still to let her mount; and she remained looking very undecided; while the coachman assured her again and again, "It's as quiet as a lamb, miss, when once you are on it."

"Yes, if once I was on it," answered Augusta; "but how am I to get on, if it won't stand still?"

"I think, my lord," said he, turning to Lord Fitzmaur, "if your lordship was to speak to it, it would know your voice."

Fitzmaur, who had been standing in the porch, feeling too sulky even to notice his favourite, came forward at these words to assist his cousin. The courtesy which had been an heirloom for nearly eight centuries proved too strong even for ill-humour; and begging Augusta not to be afraid, he patted his pony's sleek sides.

"Fie, naughty Prince! stand still, Prince!" he said.

At the sound of his master's voice the pretty creature stood still, pawed the ground, arched its proud neck, and looked as if conscious that the eyes of its young lord were proudly admiring it. Fitzmaur caressed it, bade it be a good pony, and that then he would feed it himself when he came home; to which discourse Prince replied by tossing his head.

In the mean while, this altercation with Prince had caused a slight delay, which Mr. Russell hoped would enable him to speak a few words to Alice before she and Mary joined the walking party. She, poor child, had expressed a wish to remain behind with Fitzmaur, —whom his father had forbidden to accompany them,—as she felt very little zest for amusement; but Mr. Russell had desired her not to do so. Nevertheless he longed to satisfy his anxi-

ous mind by a few minutes' conversation with her; and for this purpose, seeing there was some delay in starting, he called her to him; when, just as he was about to ask her the meaning of all that had passed, he was accosted by a strong voice behind him.

"Glad to have a few minutes for a chat, sir; long time since we have had that mutual pleasure: you don't often visit Dawson Lodge. Yes, indeed, sad work here," she added, seeing Alice; "but we shall do better another time—sha'nt we, little one? and I will lend her a pony when she is *very* good."

This was said with a patronising pat on the head to the child, and a confidential wink to the father.

Mr. Russell was in despair. In the hopes that there was no human being utterly devoid of that sixth sense called *tact*, he answered, with a slight bow, that he was at that very moment wishing to talk to his little girl about what had passed. Tact! as well might he look for French polish on a common labourer's shoes. No; Mrs. Dawson's answer immediately was, "You could not do better; indeed, I was just going to say a few words to you on that subject; indeed, in great part to express Lord and Lady De Courcy's sentiments, as well as my own."

It was a hopeless case. Mr. Russell made one other feeble attempt; but he found the lady's arm had firmly planted itself within his; and he felt her long nose very close to his ear, by which he knew she was beginning to be "confidential." Like the rest of his brotherhood, who (from whatever cause) seem always to be the easiest prey to talkative ladies, Mr. Russell was completely talked down; and for full twenty minutes he had to listen to Mrs. Dawson's expressions of sympathy, and patronising assurances that the little girl did not require harshness; that both she and Lady De Courcy were of opinion that she had excellent dispositions; but that it was a great mistake to leave her with servants, as intimacy with inferiors was dangerous; that it was a still greater mistake to send her so often to the Castle, as intimacy with children in so elevated a position as the young Fitzmaurs was still more dangerous; that a medium was the right thing; that she, Mrs. Dawson, knew well how little time Mr. Russell had to spare; that his position was a trying one; and finally, that she would have the greatest possible pleasure in assisting him in looking out for a respectable governess—one, of course, who must be willing to put up with a very small salary; and that meantime she,

Mrs. Dawson, would be delighted to receive Alice on a visit at her house, where, she added, "I could watch over the dear child as if she were my own."

When, at last, the benevolent lady stopped to take breath, Mr. Russell contrived to edge in the words, "I should be sorry to trouble . . . ."

"Oh, don't talk of the trouble, I pray, as I told Lady De Courcy, who was telling me in confidence . . . Oh, what a pretty pony-phaeton! look there!"

The pony-phaeton, which had thus interrupted the thread of Mrs. Dawson's discourse, was a particular favourite with all the children: it was drawn by two pretty bay ponies, and was itself a graceful-looking thing, very low, and would just hold two persons. Lord De Courcy had ordered it for Mary and Alice, partly to console them for not riding, and partly because he apprehended they might not be able to walk so fast as the rest of the party.

Mrs. Dawson and one or two other visitors now prepared to take their leave, as the inmates of the Castle seemed ready for their excursion.

"We will settle our little plan another time," said she, shaking hands with Mr. Russell.

"Thank you," he replied; "but I have not

the least intention of getting a governess for Alice, at least not for some time."

"Perhaps you would like a lift in my carriage, and then we might consider the matter further," continued Mrs. Dawson.

"I am afraid I must decline your kindness," he answered; "for duty calls me first to Thomas Miller close by, who is very ill, I fear dangerously, and then to some cottages at the very other end of the parish. I suspect, therefore, that I shall not have my time quite at my own disposal."

Mrs. Dawson expressed great sympathy at his hard work, and then left the room. But just as her fatigued victim had thrown himself into a chair, and was beginning to breathe, her head peeped in again.

"I should be too happy to be of use, if you would command my services. Perhaps you would like me to take your place by Thomas Miller, and then you might go at once to your other cottages."

With a smile which he could not repress, Mr. Russell rose, and said: "You are very good; but I believe the poor man requires *my personal* attendance."

"Do not wait for me," said Mr. Russell to

Lord De Courcy, as soon as the door had finally closed upon the lady; "I mean to see you off."

He hoped by this means to have a word with Alice; but it was too late: she and Mary had already placed themselves in the phaeton, and had almost forgotten their annoyances in the pleasure now before them. Edward, too, had recovered his good-humour, and was parading about on his pony before the hall-door. One solitary being stood disconsolate and gloomy: it was Fitzmaur. The merriment of the others only increased his sulkiness; he thought himself extremely ill-used, and hung his head without speaking. He was roused by feeling something behind him; he looked round, and perceived that it was Prince rubbing his nose against his shoulder, expecting to be taken notice of. Fitzmaur caressed it.

"Dear me!" cried its frightened rider; "I didn't mean him to rub his nose against you: I can't make it go any way I wish."

"Do not pull the bridle so hard,—you will hurt its little mouth," cried Fitzmaur.

The pony at this moment making a sharp turn round, Augusta gave a tremendous tug, grasping the pummel with the other hand.

"You are trying to hurt it,—I see you are

—you little vixen!" screamed Fitzmaur, almost choking.

"I am not a vixen," retorted Augusta, half crying. "I do believe you would like to see me fall off, merely because you could not ride yourself with Alice."

In greater anger, Fitzmaur was just exclaiming: "You nasty, spiteful little . . . ." when the strong voice of his father checked his words.

"Go out of my sight this instant, unworthy boy!" were the words pronounced; "and do not presume to speak to any of the party again."

This was too much for Fitzmaur; he rushed off where he could best conceal himself from view, and, throwing himself upon the grass, sobbed aloud.

He had not been in that position long, when he heard a voice calling him by name. He buried his face still further in his hands, and answered, "I cannot come now: who wants me?"

"Fitzmaur! Fitzmaur!" repeated the voice.

The boy looked up: it was Mr. Russell.

"Why do you run away from me?" he asked; "I have not yet thanked you for your kindness to my daughter, and for the ride you have been so long preparing for her."

Surprised at being addressed in so different

a tone from what he expected, Fitzmaur rose, and answered: "You have not much to thank me for; no good has come of it."

"Still I thank you for your kind intentions," returned the clergyman.

"You would not," replied Fitzmaur, "if you knew how little I deserved to be thanked."

"I have gathered that there has been some little misunderstanding," said Mr. Russell; "and I should be glad to learn from you the particulars, as I fear my daughter has been involved in it."

"Oh, she has had nothing to do with it," answered Fitzmaur; "she has only been disappointed, and borne it like an angel: I am the only one in fault."

"Lord De Courcy and others have the impression," replied Mr. Russell, "that Alice has encouraged you to disobey your father."

"I will certainly undeceive them all, then," said Fitzmaur; "I do not know how they could fancy such a thing. She was wishing to give up, and would have offered to do so, only she was afraid of making my fault appear worse if she did. She urged me to submit, and I was almost cross to her."

To this the clergyman remarked (an involuntary glow of pleasure passing over his brow),

"But why, since you only wished to do Alice a kindness, did you not yield, upon finding her ready to do so?"

Fitzmaur hung his head, and answered nothing.

"Confess, my dear boy," continued his friend, "that it was a feeling of ill-temper that actuated you, and made you so rebellious to your father."

Mr. Russell's kindness had melted Fitzmaur's sulkiness, as the mid-day sun thaws the icicles from the trees, and turned it into tears of penitence. He related at length the whole affair, from the time of his first planning to give Alice the ride. He then confessed, that when Augusta expressed a wish to ride, and that Lord De Courcy insisted upon his giving up to her his pony, he felt so much anger and ill-will, that the wish to give Alice a pleasure ceased to be the predominant feeling in his mind; that opposition only strengthened these bad feelings; and that the more displeased his father became, the more resolved he was to have his own way.

"I felt so provoked," he continued, "that the least contradiction, even the most kindly meant, made me worse. I should probably have quarrelled with Alice quite as much as with any one, if she had thwarted me. And that is why I said you had no reason to thank me, because

I was not thinking of her all the time, though I was at first."

"I am glad you are sufficiently candid to admit that," answered Mr. Russell.

"But do you not think," asked Fitzmaur, "that it was rather hard upon me, after taking so much pains to get my pony trained to carry a lady, to be disappointed, and to have my property forcibly given to another?"

"I can understand its having annoyed you very much at first," answered Mr. Russell.

"And again, just now," continued Fitzmaur, "papa sent me away quite angrily, when really I was only calling out because I was afraid Augusta would hurt my pretty little Prince."

"Yes," returned Mr. Russell, "I saw what passed; your father only happened to hear your rough words; so, perhaps, he may have thought you were giving way to angry feelings without any provocation at all."

"Then you do think I had some cause to be vexed?" asked Fitzmaur.

"I think," replied Mr. Russell, "as I told you before, that you had reason to feel disappointed; but I cannot understand how any one, with the slightest degree of self-control, could be capable of acting as you have done. You may depend upon it, the command of your fa-

ther, even if severe, does not make your conduct in the least excusable. You have been guilty of three faults: disobedience, selfishness, and ill-temper."

"I know I did wrong," said Fitzmaur; "but it is very difficult when one feels hurt, and fancies oneself in the right, not to be a little angry."

"You may be quite sure," returned his monitor, "that when you are angry, you are not wholly in the right, however much you may fancy it; for there is something in the consciousness of being right, that brings peace of mind, and then people are not disposed to be angry. Then as to its being difficult to restrain such impetuosity, that I am ready to admit. I always told you that self-denial was difficult, but you would hardly believe me; you assured me, upon a day's trial, that it was perfectly easy."

Fitzmaur looked very much ashamed when that subject was introduced; and replied, "I was not thinking about self-denial this afternoon; in fact, I did not expect it would be in that sort of thing — I am afraid I don't explain myself clearly."

"Why, not very," said Mr. Russell, smiling; "but I think I am conjuror enough to tell you your thoughts better than you can tell them to me.

You fancied, that if it had been a ride for yourself which you were required to give up, the thought of exercising self-denial would have occurred to you; but that, as the pleasure was for another, it could not be an omission of that virtue to persist in having your own way. In short, you sheltered yourself under the imaginary merit of doing a kindness to another, while, in reality, you were indulging your pride and stubbornness."

"Exactly," cried Fitzmaur; "you have just put my thoughts into good words."

"That is the way," returned the clergyman, "in which people deceive themselves; not children only, but all of us. We are so apt to imagine that the particular case, in which we are called upon to exercise a virtue, is an exception to the general rule, and does not require the self-sacrifice which conscience suggests to us. And thus we lose golden opportunities of serving God and improving ourselves. For instance, you could not have had a better opportunity than you had to-day of practising self-denial, but you missed it. For obedience to a superior is such a bounden duty, that, in general, we can hardly consider it a voluntary act of self-denial, when we merely obey; but when the command we receive is founded upon

a mistake, or misapprehension in him who gives it, and causes us an undeserved disappointment, then, if we obey cheerfully and implicitly, it is, as the Apostle terms it, praiseworthy. Then the worst part of your conduct I have not yet touched upon, namely, disrespect to a parent. The sin of this is so glaring, that I need hardly point it out to you; indeed, I am sure that you must have been quite carried away by your temper before you could be capable of so erring. I must say that, in general, you are remarkable for the reverse of this fault. Nothing can excuse disobedience or disrespect to a parent, not even harshness or injustice on his part; whereas, on the present occasion, your father was neither harsh nor unjust."

"I see, indeed," replied the penitent boy, "that I have done very, very wrong. I am afraid, when you think of the letter I wrote you last night, you will look upon me as a hypocrite."

"Oh, no," said Mr. Russell; "I am sure you meant and felt all you said at the time; but you over-rated your own strength, and trusted too much to yourself. You will be wiser another time."

"Yes, truly," Fitzmaur replied; "I shall not again, in a hurry, be so sure of doing right.

I am afraid I have made papa very angry; and then dear mamma, too, looked so sad, and so annoyed: I cannot bear grieving her. And Mary, too, cried; and Alice was unhappy; and Edward got into a scrape on my behalf. What mischief my temper has caused; how I have spoiled every one's pleasure!" Tear after tear rolled down his cheeks as he enumerated the effects of his fault.

"It is true," said Mr. Russell; "no one can do wrong without more or less extending the consequences of his fault beyond himself. But now you must try to make up for it."

"That I will indeed,—I wish I could,—I will do any thing you tell me," exclaimed the boy, with eagerness.

"In the first place, then," returned the clergyman, "you must be really penitent, and resolve to do differently another time; and you must pray to God to forgive you, and to help you to keep your resolutions. Then you must remember your fault for some time, and let the recollection of it make you very humble, very gentle to others, very careful not even to wish for the best of anything, feeling yourself undeserving of any gratification: this must be your voluntary punishment. Then those consequences of your fault, which will come whether you wish it or

not, you must bear with patience, humility, and cheerfulness. For instance; your father will probably punish you (for your own sake I hope he will): even if he seem to you more severe than you deserve, be humble and submissive. Perhaps, also, your aunt and cousin will feel piqued with you, and instead of sympathising with you, and being sorry for you, they may possibly be glad to see you punished;—in that case, mind you are humble, gentle, and forgiving, remembering how much more you have to be forgiven. Do not retort, if you are provoked; but try to re-establish yourself in every body's opinion, by extra good-humour and amiability."

"If you were in papa's place, what punishment would you impose?" asked Fitzmaur.

"Why, truly," replied Mr. Russell, half laughing, "I am not prepared to say; probably I should deprive you of your pony for a month. But tell me, my dear boy, are you willing to submit to these possible consequences of your fault?"

"Yes," replied Fitzmaur, "I will submit to whatever comes to me as patiently as I can. Do you think that by doing so, I can in any way make amends for my wrong temper?"

"I believe," answered Mr. Russell, "that

if you are really sorry for your fault, and prove your sorrow by acts of penitence, God, for His Son's sake, will receive you, and bless you; and you will be an object of rejoicing to His good angels. God bless you, my child!"

Fitzmaur and his friend had by this time walked on some way; and the cottage to which the latter was bound was now close by. They had reached a spot where the path through the wood joined the road, and here they were to part. They shook hands most warmly; and the penitent boy, looking up through his tears, was soothed and encouraged by the affectionate smile with which Mr. Russell took leave of him: "You have made me so much happier," he said, with gratitude.

Another fervent "God bless you!" and in a few minutes Mr. Russell was out of sight.

How much more peaceful Fitzmaur felt now! He was, of course, still painfully conscious of having done wrong; but he felt forgiven. He sauntered slowly through the wood; the path lay at the height of some hundred feet above the river,—here and there an opening discovered a beautiful view of hills and valleys beyond; and, as he advanced, the wood became more and more open, and the character of the scenery more rocky and precipitous. Still the

boy wandered on,—now stopping to throw a pebble into the water, now plucking an oak-apple, and shooting it like a marble; but all the while his thoughts deeply occupied, pondering over what had passed and what was to come. "I am resolved," said he to himself, "that I will follow implicitly Mr. Russell's advice. If Augusta teases me about what has happened, I will be good-humoured; nay more, whether she does or not, I will beg her pardon for being rude to her. Stay, can I do that? it will be so very difficult. And then, she really was a *little* to blame; why should she not meet me half way? No, no; there I am again trying to shirk the very thing that would be a self-denial. No, I *will* do it; I shall feel ashamed, and, I daresay, look like a fool; but I *will* do it. Well then, if papa is angry with me, I will be very submissive, and try to feel more sorry for the fault than for the punishment. But perhaps he will not punish me, he is so kind; and that dear Mary will coax him, and persuade him to forgive me; and so perhaps, when he sees me penitent, he will forgive me, and I shall have no punishment. That won't do. Mr. Russell said, he, in papa's place, would deprive me of my pony for a month; and added, that he hoped, for my sake, that papa *would* punish me (I wonder why?).

Well then, if papa is so very kind as to let me off, I will, of my own accord, give up my pony for a month,—at least, perhaps not for a *whole* month,—I will ask Mr. Russell, if it need be for a *whole* month. But, at any rate, I will give it up for some little time; and I will let Edward have the first ride with Alice, instead of me. Then I will try to be *so* humble and good-natured to every one!"

Such were the reflections and resolutions which Fitzmaur made during his solitary walk; he was so eager and enthusiastic, that as he made them he almost bounded along. But all of a sudden he stopped short. "Suppose I break all these resolutions, as I did my last! How am I to be sure that I shall not?" This thought appalled him for a moment, but only for a moment. He looked round to see if any one was coming; then kneeling down upon a stone overgrown with moss, he joined his hands, and raising them to heaven, prayed to the good God for strength to keep his resolutions. He had taken off his straw hat when he knelt down, and laid it by his side; and the breeze blew back his light curls from his forehead, and fanned his flushed face; there was nothing to disturb his thoughts in that lonely spot. Lonely, did I say? Do not suppose that I meant he was

alone. Could his eyes have been opened, he would have beheld blessed beings near him, waiting to carry his prayer to the throne of grace. No one ever yet knelt down to say a prayer, and was alone.

How happy and light-hearted Fitzmaur felt when he rose from his knees! He walked or ran,—all sadness dissipated; and the passer-by, who heard his merry whistling, would little deem how lately he had been in tears. He had wandered on without much considering where he was going; and now he was fairly out of the wood, and was on the rocky path which he knew to be not far from the water-fall, where the rest of the party were. "I had better not go on, lest I should stumble on some of them; and then papa might think I had come to join the party, in spite of his prohibition." Thus reasoned Fitzmaur, and stopped a minute to look about him. It was too late to go back through the wood—that was the longest way; he looked at his watch,—"It is near seven o'clock," he said to himself; "they must have passed before this,—it is near their dressing-time,—so I may as well get down upon the road." The boy resumed his whistling as he descended the side of the rocky hill which would bring him down upon the road. But in a few minutes he saw

the pony-phaeton driving rapidly along the road beneath him; and he could distinctly see that Mary and Alice had resigned their places in it to Lady Charles and her daughter. "She is soon tired of her ride," said the boy to himself. Scarcely had he uttered, or rather thought, the words, than he saw his favourite Newfoundland dog, by name Hector, that had set off walking with Lord De Courcy, bounding up the rocks to meet him. "You faithful Hector!" said he, stooping to caress him, "have you traced me here? that shews the walkers cannot be far off, so I will wait till they have passed." The dog, instead of returning his caress as usual, pulled him by the coat. "What is the matter?" said its young master. "Why, Hector, how is this? there is blood upon you! My poor dog, have you been hurt?" The dog only wagged his tail, and pulled him all the harder by the coat. Fitzmaur examined his favourite very closely, but could find no wound anywhere; there were only a few marks of blood upon its feet. "You are not hurt yourself, you dog," said the boy, "but you have trodden in blood; where can you have been?" On a sudden, like an electric shock, darted a horrible thought through the boy's mind—I say like an electric shock, for the idea was rapid and withering, like the scath-

ing flash of lightning. "They have met with some accident!" he exclaimed aloud. The dog seemed to understand him, for he ceased pulling him, and trotted on, looking round to see if his master was following. "Suppose something has happened to mamma!" was Fitzmaur's first exclamation; then clasping his hands, "Oh, that it may not be mamma!"

Swifter than an arrow darted the boy; from rock to rock he bounded with incredible speed—the mountain-goat would have lagged behind. Poor Hector, with his double proportion of legs, could not keep a-head of him, and so gave up all attempts at guiding him. Fitzmaur was down upon the road sooner than words can tell it, and then almost flew along towards the waterfall. But he was checked in his course by meeting Mary and Alice, walking slowly towards home; and Edward, leading his pony, walking beside them.

"Oh, pray tell me quickly, what has happened," cried Fitzmaur; "is any one hurt?"

"No; no one is hurt," answered Edward; "but Augusta has had a fall."

"I am glad it is nothing worse," replied the other; "was she not at all hurt?"

"No, not at all, but terribly frightened; and Lady Charles, of course, almost in fits, and hindering every one, instead of helping."

So spoke Edward; and his brother, relieved from his fears, stopped a moment or two to rest. While doing so, he perceived traces of tears on Mary's countenance; and he remarked to himself, that they all seemed very dull and sad, and not at all like people returning from a pleasant excursion. He did not like to ask his sister point-blank, why she was crying, for fear of renewing her disposition to cry; so he began by inquiring where the rest of the party were; and he learned that his mother and the other ladies, with one of the gentlemen, had gone home another way; and that his father and one or two others were remaining behind with Prince. A new idea now darted through Fitzmaur's mind, as he recollected the marks of blood on the dog's feet; not, indeed, quite so dreadful as the former, but still very painful; and he exclaimed, with a faltering voice, "Where is Prince? what has happened to him?" This was the very question which touched the spring of Mary's tears — they gathered fast into her eyes; and the effort she made to command her voice and answer her brother brought them in streams down her cheeks. She gave up the attempt, and turned away. Poor perplexed Fitzmaur appealed to Edward, but his head was buried in his pony's neck. No one seemed

able to explain but Alice; and yet, if any one could have looked into her breast, perhaps he would have found that her grief was the deepest and most sincere of all,—for she had the painful consciousness, that all the misfortunes of this unfortunate day were caused by the wish to please her; and though grateful for the good-will shewn her, she heartily wished herself in the retirement of the Rectory, stitching by Nurse Roberts' side. But it was, perhaps, the number of days she had in her little life spent thus, stitching, with no one to speak to but her nurse or the cat, that had taught her to repress her feelings. At all events, she had that sincere desire to mitigate the grief of others, that she had barely time to think of her own. On the present occasion this was serviceable: she slid her arm round her friend, and quietly drawing him away from the others, she made a sign to them to go on their way homewards, while she turned back with him. "Dear Fitzmaur," she then said, "I fear you will be very unhappy; but it is better to know the whole truth. I fear your pony is very much hurt."

"How is he hurt?" said the poor boy, hardly able to command his voice.

"I will tell you how it all happened," said Alice. "No one is to blame; it is one of those

things which, I suppose my father would say, should be borne with patience and good-temper. I have been trying to do so; but I cannot tell you how unhappy I am for you."

Now this casual way of alluding to her father had just the very effect Alice wished for; it recalled to Fitzmaur's mind all his conversations with Mr. Russell, and especially the one he had had that afternoon; and conscience whispered, that this was a just punishment. As he did not speak, this thought had time to strengthen, while Alice told the circumstances.

"We had all got safe and sound past the waterfall,—we had admired the view from the top of the hill,—and Augusta and Edward seemed to enjoy their ride very much. Thus far all was well; Augusta had got over her nervousness, and Prince had behaved extremely well. But it was then proposed to go down the other side of the hill, to get to the foot of that on which is the ruined tower;—you know that side of the hill is very rocky, and there is no road; one has to wind down a steep, craggy path, and to pass that narrow bit close to the cave, which the common people about call the Penitent's Cave (I never could think why). It was at first debated whether the riders had not better dismount, and Augusta was very willing to do

whatever was wished; but as you and Edward had often been down that way on your ponies, it was pronounced quite safe. However, after we had gone a little way, one of the gentlemen said he would lead Augusta's pony by the reins, as it might be safer. This was the most unfortunate thing he could have thought of, though he meant it so goodnaturedly. Prince was going very well, and probably would have gone on equally well, for he was always a sure-footed little animal—I have heard you say, he never tripped in his life; but directly he felt the bridle touched, he indignantly tossed his head, and began to trot, so that the gentleman did not catch hold of it. Augusta became frightened, and pulled the reins so suddenly, as to check his pace, and make him lose his footing. He fell down on his knees upon a sharp piece of rock, and Augusta went over his head. She was not hurt, for she quite cleared the rock, and fell upon a bed of moss beneath; but poor Prince fractured his leg, and in rolling over, severely lacerated his side."

"Cannot he be cured?" faltered Fitzmaur.

"Oh, I cannot say how much I hope it," exclaimed Alice; "but I will not conceal the truth from you. I heard Lord De Courcy say, it was impossible."

Fitzmaur did not speak another word—tear after tear rolled down his cheeks; but as his companion knew how much he disliked to be seen crying, she took no notice; and shortly after, turned back to join Mary and Edward. When he reached the spot on the brow of the hill, the first object that met the eyes of the sorrowful boy was his favourite Prince, stretched upon the ground, with a pool of blood by his side, and one of the gentlemen examining the legs. Lord De Courcy was standing with his arms folded, looking very disconsolate. The coachman was not there.

"This is sad indeed, my boy," said the father, when he saw his son; "I am sorry for you, very sorry indeed."

The boy was a little soothed by this kind way of speaking, and replied, "Is there nothing that can be done?"

"Nothing, I grieve to say; nothing. We have examined him closely,—you see both the legs are fractured, and one in a shocking manner; the poor animal is in intense pain—he could not possibly walk again; the most merciful thing to do is to put him out of suffering. I have sent the coachman for my gun."

"O papa, papa!—is it so bad as that?" Fitzmaur knelt down by his pet, and stroked

its head; at the sound of his young master's voice, poor Prince looked up; and it seemed to the boy as if he pleaded with him to ease his pain,—he raised his neck, as if to court the accustomed caress; but his sides were heaving, as in agony. When Fitzmaur saw the pain he was in, and the horrible state of the fracture, he fully felt the justice of his father's remark; and, giving his pony one last kiss, in a low voice said, "Good bye, poor Prince." The coachman was now in sight.

"Come away, my dear boy," said Lord De Courcy; "there is no use harrowing up your feelings by looking at this; in a few minutes he will be out of pain."

Slowly and sadly Fitzmaur returned home with his father, and neither spoke for some time. The father was really grieved for what had happened; though he had been angry with his son previously, he never wished him to have such a real cause for regret and sorrow. In fact, the sympathy he felt with him, and the pain it had given him to witness the sufferings of the poor animal, had almost effaced from his recollection the transgression of the afternoon. Not so, however, with Fitzmaur himself. During his silent walk he was reflecting upon his fault, his conversation with Mr. Russell, his own re-

solutions, and his prayer. "God is helping me to keep my resolutions," said he to himself. "I thought a month would be too long for a penance; now I have lost my pony for ever. I forgot to take up the cross myself to-day, and now a heavier one is laid upon me. I shall, however, have an opportunity of making up for my fault by bearing this well." His reflections were interrupted by his father.

"It must be all over now," said Lord De Courcy.

"Poor Prince!" faintly answered Fitzmaur. "Papa," said he, when they had reached the house-door, "I hope you will forgive me for my fault to-day; I look upon this as a punishment, and I feel that I deserve it."

"Forgive you!" exclaimed his father, surprised and gratified, "yes, my boy, I forgive you with all my heart; God bless you." As he said this, he shook him heartily by the hand.

Fitzmaur then explained to his father his error respecting Alice. Lord De Courcy seemed quite pleased at having his mistake removed; and exclaimed, impatiently, "It's all that most stupid woman!"

Fearful of delaying to put his resolutions into practice, Fitzmaur then at once repaired to his cousin's room: he found her on the sofa,

and his mother and Lady Charles sitting by her. "You are not hurt, I hope," said he, on entering the room.

"O Fitzmaur!" exclaimed Augusta, the instant she saw him; "it is not my fault, indeed it is not; and I am so very, very sorry for your misfortune." The poor child looked sincere.

"No, I am sure it was not your fault," returned her cousin; "and I am glad you are not hurt. Augusta . . . ." continued he, hesitating, and a deep crimson covering his handsome features, "I am sorry I was so rude to you this afternoon; will you forgive me?"

"O Fitzmaur, I wish I had not spoiled your pleasure; I never will be cross to you again." Augusta said this in all sincerity; but good feelings are transient when they are not founded upon principle.

"My noble boy!" said his mother, folding him in her arms. Fitzmaur laid his head on that beloved shoulder, which in infancy had been his pillow; her arm was round his waist, and her cheek rested on his head.

Young reader, believe me, at that moment he felt happy, though Prince was dead.

CHAPTER IV.

THE QUEEN.

SOME days had passed since poor Prince's death; cheerfulness had been quite restored to the little party at the Castle; Fitzmaur was in some measure consoled for the loss of his pony, and spent his leisure time in his favourite pursuit of fishing, or in playing with his companions. Alice generally joined the party in the afternoon, when her friends had finished the business of the day.

On one such afternoon, while a tedious and violent shower of rain detained the juvenile party in the house, a little conversation took place, which shall be here recorded. They were in the play-room; the little girls were diligently hemming and sewing their dolls' things, and had pronounced an occasional rainy day to be very convenient for getting on with business. The boys had been to the window, if once, at least fifty times, declaring each time that "it *must* give over soon—it *could* not go on so all day;" and at last Fitzmaur, with a yawn, which seemed

like the relinquishment of his character as a prophet, had thrown himself in a reclining posture upon the rocking-horse, with his back supported by the neck, and his face to the tail. But Edward—oh, let us not attempt to describe him; for if we see him at one end of the room one minute, it is the most certain sign that he will be at the other end the next. He had successively broken two pairs of scissors and unwound three balls of cotton by fidgeting; and now, lying on his back on the floor, with his knees in the air, he drawled out, "What a bore needlework must be! how I should dislike it!"

"So should I, I almost think," replied Alice, laughing, "if I had always to pick up my cotton so often as I have done to-day."

It must be admitted, that the customs of the world, by assigning politics to mankind and needlework to womankind, have equally distributed the powers of doing mischief—decreeing that the former should effect it with their fingers, and the latter with their tongues.

"I hope it will not rain like this on my birthday," said Fitzmaur.

"That is looking rather too forward," replied his sister.

"But, Fitzmaur," exclaimed Edward, as a new idea seemed to pass through his mind,

" there is one most important point respecting your birthday which you have forgotten."

" Pray remind me of it, then."

" You may remember you are to be king of the day: you ought to have a queen."

" I assure you," returned the future monarch, " I had not forgotten it; I had not only resolved to have a queen, but I had even settled who she should be."

" Have you asked the lady's consent?" said Augusta; " for that seems to be a preliminary you do not think much about."

" I am sure the lady of my choice will not refuse to be my queen," replied Fitzmaur; " and, by the by, Antoinette told me she knew how to make a very pretty crown of flowers: she shall make it now, that we may see if we like it; and then I will place it upon the head of my queen."

The French maid, being called down, and supplied with the requisite flowers, in a short time framed a really pretty wreath in the form of a crown, which, she said, when tied with gold twist, would have a very good effect. The children were all very much pleased with it, and made her promise to have one ready for the birthday.

" Now then," cried Fitzmaur, holding the wreath high in the air, when it had been duly

handled by all, "which is the head worthiest to wear this crown?"

There were two little rivals present, each of whom thought herself the worthiest, and fully expected the crown to descend upon her head; and two little hearts were unconsciously harbouring feelings of ambition, not unmixed with vanity; and one there was, not thinking about herself at all, but whose dark beaming eyes were looking up with eager curiosity to see on which of the other two the crown would rest.

"Bright lady, will you deign to be my queen?" said Fitzmaur, kneeling with mimic gallantry, and placing the wreath upon Alice's head.

"Long live Queen Alice!" shouted Edward.

"Me a queen!" exclaimed Alice, with real surprise; "oh, how funny to see me a queen! how my father will laugh!" And the blushing girl laughed most unfeignedly at the notion of her intended dignity.

"Why should you not be a queen?" asked Fitzmaur; "you look like the queen of the gipseys," he continued, retreating a few paces to look at the effect of the red flowers among her dark curls.

"Dat do suit Miss Alice vary well," said the French maid; "de red, wid de green leaf,

do shew off de dark eyes; but I do tink it would also suit Miladi Mary."

"Oh, yes, let us try it on Mary!" cried the boys.

The wreath was placed upon their sister's head; and there could indeed be no doubt respecting its suitability. The dark green among the rich fair tresses, and the straight line of features descending from the marble brow on which the garland rested, gave to the little maiden a classic and truly queen-like beauty.

"Oh, dat is just de ting!" exclaimed the French maid.

"Mary looks like a real queen," said Alice; "she would be a much better one than I can be—I should not know what to say; and Mary looks as if she was born to be a queen."

"Yes," replied Fitzmaur, "Mary would make a tolerable queen; but I mean you to be my queen on my birthday. You know the queen will not have much to do: all the power and consequence will be in the king."

Alice made no further objection after so very chivalrous a speech. She recollected that Fitzmaur had been disappointed not long before in his wish to give her a pleasure, and she would not thwart him again: besides, she rather liked the prospect of her intended dignity; she felt

that, with so many friends around her, she should not be so painfully shy as usual, and there could be nothing else to mar the pleasure of temporary royalty; so she acquiesced, and nothing more was said for a few minutes.

Mary was slightly disappointed; she thought it would have been natural for her brother to have made her his queen, and it was just the sort of thing she would have liked; for one of her foibles was, the wish to be very much noticed, and to take the lead in every thing. She felt, therefore, a little hurt, but very little; for she was well pleased that Alice should have the pleasure. She had no jealousy; and, by the time Antoinette had left the room, taking away the envied wreath, she had almost reasoned herself into good-humour. Almost, I say; for her self-control had not time to perfect itself, when all her good thoughts were dissipated by a remark of Augusta's:—"Alice will be the young lady of the house, I suppose, on that day; and Mary and I shall be her maids of honour."

Mary's brow clouded over at these words. She to be put aside in her own home, and another to receive all the honours which were her own due! and this, too, when the house would be full of company! The idea was intolerable. Mary changed colour, bit her lips, and hung

her head to conceal her displeasure; but she answered nothing.

Why did Augusta make so foolish a remark? did she not know that it was just the thing most likely to irritate Mary? Yes, she knew it full well; and that was the very reason she said it. But why did she say it? From this unworthy motive:—Augusta had also fully made up her mind that she should have been queen of the day; she had settled it all in her own thoughts most satisfactorily; and she had been dwelling with great pleasure upon the smart dress she should wear, the great attentions she should receive, and all the pretty things that would be said to her. She had not for an instant calculated upon Alice stepping thus over her head; she had indeed admitted the possibility of Mary being first in her father's house, but then she thought it more likely that the post of honour should be yielded to a visitor, and that in that case, of course, it would be to her. When, therefore, she saw Alice so deliberately preferred to her, before her face, she was filled with envy and anger. She would have cared less if it had been Mary; but Alice—the object of her jealousy, and such a little simple, unpretending thing—to be set above the daughter of Lady Charles Fitzmaur, the heiress of a hundred

thousand pounds!—oh, it was too bad! Thus reasoned Augusta to herself; but she did not dare express her feelings openly, Edward and Fitzmaur would have quizzed her; so she could only vent her indignation in secret; and she had a strong desire to make Mary, as well as herself, quarrel with their little rival.

Perhaps, at first, some of my young readers will be disposed to think this too naughty of Augusta to be natural; but it is to be feared that the case is not so unusual as one might wish. Perhaps even many, who would at first suppose themselves incapable of such a fault, on closer self-examination might discover feelings very similar to Augusta's within their own breasts. They do not originally spring from malice, but from vanity, or self-love, which begets so many other vices. Love of admiration produces envy, and this causes ill-humour; and when once a bad temper is indulged, people are capable of almost any sin. Seeing, then, that her cousin looked annoyed, but answered nothing, Augusta continued, "How should you like to be maid of honour, Mary?"

"Me a maid of honour!" exclaimed Mary, tossing her head.

"Yes, maid of honour to Queen Alice," continued Augusta perseveringly.

"That I certainly shall not be," replied Mary.

"Nor I," said the other; "so I am afraid Queen Alice will have no attendants."

"I'll tell you what, young ladies," said Edward, with a quizzing wink, "the cat is out of the bag."

"What do you mean?" asked they.

"Why, I mean," said he, "that two certain young ladies are envious and jealous that they are not to be queens."

This was rather too provoking.

"What business have you to say that we are jealous?" exclaimed Mary, looking very angry.

"And, pray, what right have you to suppose we wish to be queens?" added Augusta.

"It looks rather like it," replied Edward, in the pause of a tune he was whistling.

"I am sure Fitzmaur may please himself," replied Mary. "I do not care about it, though every body has said that I ought to be queen."

"Every body!" repeated Fitzmaur; "pray, who is every body?"

"Oh, a good many people—Mrs. Dawson for one."

"Mrs. Dawson!" exclaimed Fitzmaur; "Mrs. Dawson! who ever heard her quoted before,

except as the personification of a bore? If any thing was likely to determine me against having a queen, it would be Mrs. Dawson's having chosen her."

"I do not see why you should be so virulent against Mrs. Dawson," remarked Mary.

"No," said Augusta; "you are always abusing her; and really she seems to me very good-natured."

"Oh, very!" returned Edward, mimicking her voice, and pretending to turn round to some one confidentially; "sweet little dears, ma'am! charming children, ma'am! A hundred thousand pounds, ma'am! fine thing indeed, ma'am! you know, ma'am, all entailed upon her!—It is easy to divine why Augusta is so fond of Mrs. Dawson; she is always whispering to some one, loud enough for Aunt Charles or Augusta to hear, something about the hundred thousand pounds."

"And I suppose Mary likes her," said Fitzmaur, laughing heartily at his brother's drollery, "because of the fine aristocratic carriage, ma'am."

Alice laughed too; for the boys were capital mimics, and it was very irresistible. This provoked Mary more; but Alice had not yet perceived that she was angry, and so quite unsuspectingly said, "But, Mary dear, if you wish to be queen,

it would be much better that you should be; for I am such a little bit of a thing to be perched upon a throne."

"I think it is very rude of you, Alice," said Augusta, "to persist in asserting that Mary wishes to be queen, when she says she does not."

"Mary did *not* say that she did not wish it," replied Alice, quietly.

"I must say," said Mary, "I do not know why all of you are so determined to quarrel with Augusta and me."

"Quarrel with you!" exclaimed Fitzmaur; "nobody is quarrelling but yourselves."

"I think you ought rather to quarrel with Augusta," returned Edward, "for making out that you told such a fib."

"For shame, Edward!" cried Mary; "how can you be so rude to Augusta and me?"

"Augusta and me!" repeated Edward; "what sworn allies you are become of a sudden! I never knew that you and Augusta were such bosom-friends."

"Come," said Fitzmaur, to stop the dispute, "it has done raining now; let us do something instead of fighting. Come, Alice, to the swing in the garden, and let us leave the bosom-friends together."

Edward and Alice rose to go out; but a new light had flashed across the mind of the latter as she looked at Mary's flushed and pouting face. She did not give utterance to a single word; but as she thoughtfully sauntered towards the garden, she said within herself, "This must not be: the day's pleasure will be quite spoiled, as it was about the ride. I must manage better this time: I must manage some way for Mary to be queen."

In the mean while, what passed between the two little girls in the play-room? Alas for the evil passions of human nature! let not children think that, because they are children, they are incapable of wickedness! The same wrong feelings which in mature years, and in the affairs of kingdoms, cause war and bloodshed, were raging under the soft exterior of girlhood—the same wrong feelings, only diminutive and weak as the stature and sex of those that harboured them.

Augusta was pleased at having aroused Mary; she felt disposed to quarrel with Alice, and was glad to have Mary on her side. She was jealous of Alice, though she hardly knew why.

"I am not sorry," she said to her cousin, "to see you assert your own rights a little, for really Alice is always contriving to step before you."

"I do not think she tries to do so," said Mary, as the recollection of her friend's gentleness crossed her angry mind.

"I would not be too sure of that," said the envious girl. "She is a sly little thing; you may depend upon it, she persuaded Fitzmaur to make her his queen."

Mary felt the injustice of this accusation; and had she not been in such an ill-humour, she would not have sat by to hear her friend so calumniated; but as it was, she said nothing.

"At all events, it is too bad," continued Augusta, "that she should supplant you and eclipse you in every thing."

"I do not think she does so," said Mary.

"Yes, but she does; other people see that she does. She is always being taken notice of; I assure you, I have heard people pity you for being so much put aside for her."

To have been really put aside would have been less grating to Mary's feelings, than the notion of others remarking it and pitying her for it. She asked in a bitter tone, what Augusta meant.

"Why, once I heard my governess say to your governess, while Alice was playing with your brothers, 'What a nice position Lady Mary's is—that of an only daughter of such a

house as this!' And then your governess answered, looking towards Alice, 'If this intimacy goes on, it is easy to see who will be in a still nicer position some day.'"

"But I do not understand what that means," said Mary.

"No more do I exactly," answered Augusta; "but it must mean that Alice would take your place, in some way or other, some day."

This was certainly not soothing to an irritated temper. When angry feelings are roused, a thousand little things will be considered provocations, which otherwise would not be noticed at all. That evening, when the party from the dining-room came out to join the children, one of the guests, a gentleman, who was rather a favourite among them, patted Alice on the head, and called her a good little girl; and quite accidentally passed by Mary without noticing her at all. At no other moment would Mary have cared for such a thing; on the contrary, she was always glad to see her friend caressed; but now the silly girl resented it.

"I do not see why you should monopolise all the attention of papa's guests," she said, peevishly; "you might, I think, be satisfied with being queen of the birth-day."

To this no reply was made; but Mary was

cross all the rest of the evening. Now Alice was but a little girl, and a very quiet one; but she had a firmness of mind and clearsightedness peculiar to herself. She saw at once what was the matter, and what ought to be done to remedy the evil. In an instant the consequences of Mary's misunderstanding, and of Augusta's envy, presented themselves to her mind: the complete spoiling of a pleasant day; Lord and Lady De Courcy's displeasure, if ill-humour was to be shewn; and the disappointment of the servants and tenantry, if any thing was to go wrong with their young lord or lady.

"No, no, this must not be," said the little reasoner to herself, as in a thoughtful mood she returned to the Rectory, "and it *shall not be.* Mary *shall* be queen; or, at any rate, I will not be queen. After all, it is her place; I do not wonder at her feeling rather put out—it is quite unfair that I should be in the principal place on her own brother's birthday, and in her own house. It is very goodnatured of Fitzmaur to me; but I am sure every one else would be better pleased to see Mary queen,—and so it *shall be.*"

But then another difficulty arose: Fitzmaur was always positive in having his own way; and on this occasion he would be less than ever dis-

posed to yield, after his little dispute with his sister. It would be worse than all, to spoil his pleasure on his own birthday, and to put him out of humour. Besides, it seemed a very ungracious task, to have so often to thwart him in his intended kindnesses to herself. What was to be done? It was rather perplexing; but that something should be devised, Alice was determined. It occurred to her that her father might help her, by suggesting some way of satisfying all parties; but then it would not do to tell him that Mary was .... Alice felt at a loss for a term to express her friend's feelings. No, she must take care not to say a word about her or Augusta; but then, without doing so, how was her father to help her? At all events, she would try: perhaps, if she simply told him that she was to be queen, he would say of his own accord that it was not her place.

"Oh yes, that would just do," thought Alice; "Fitzmaur would be sure to give way, if my father told him. If he will but put away his books, and be disengaged for this one evening!"

Mr. Russell was disengaged; so far there was a promising beginning. Yes, he was disengaged, and had been for the last ten minutes longing for his daughter's return. He had drawn his chair from an untidy table, strewed with books

and papers, to the open window, to enjoy the perfume of a summer evening, and to repose awhile after a wearisome day. The sun was setting, and the brilliant red rays fell directly upon the painting of the Holy Family on the wall, and seemed to centre upon the circlet of glory round the head of the Divine Child. The room was not in its best order; it seemed sadly to need the return of its little mistress, whose office it was to put it to rights. Fragments of letters, torn up when read, were scattered about the floor; pens unwiped were lying on the table; a large folio volume of Hooker's "Polity" was standing open on the ground, supported by a leg of the table; another volume of similar dimensions of St. Chrysostom was upon a chair, and on it a parish-register, and on the top of that a long paper containing a list of schoolboys requiring clothes.

The table was cleared and tidy in a trice by the magic touch of Alice's hand; every book and every paper was restored to its place (she knew the nich and the drawer for each); and the favourite tabby cat, which had impudently coiled itself into her father's greatcoat, which it had found temptingly thrown upon a side-table, was turned off with the rebuke of "Saucy puss," the coat carefully brushed, and hung on its

wonted peg. And now, the affectionate task completed, it wanted yet half an hour to bed-time. What a pleasant half hour was before her! how quickly was the little stool at her father's feet, and its young owner seated thereon, with her elbows resting on his knees!

"Father," she said, after a pause, "do you know I am to be queen of the day on Fitzmaur's birthday?"

"Indeed!" replied her father; "that is a wonderful promotion."

"Yes, and every one is to pass in review before us and pay homage," said the little girl.

"I am sure," the clergyman answered, "that I must be among the first to do homage most respectfully."

"Oh, I hope you will not, father dear; I should feel so ashamed."

Then, after a little discussion on the proper way of supporting regal honours, during which she tried to give the conversation a turn towards the point she had at heart, she said, "Do you not think I shall make a very bad queen?"

"That remains to be proved; I am quite ignorant of your powers of ruling."

"But would not Mary make a much better queen?"

"It is difficult to say; she would make a

more stately one, certainly; but of your respective merits as sovereigns I know nothing."

"Would it not be much *better* for Mary to be queen?"

"I should think the king was the fittest judge of that; and as it is his birthday, it seems fair to let him have his own way in so trifling a matter."

Alice was silent for a minute or two; it was clear Mr. Russell was not on the right tack, and she must get him there if possible, without compromising Mary.

"But, father, I am sure it would be better for Mary to be queen; and I feel certain that it would please all the tenants and servants much more."

"I hardly think so, because Fitzmaur will be so much the principal object with them, that they will not pay much attention to the queen; and I believe it is more in accordance with the rules of etiquette that the queen should be a visitor, and not the sister of the king. But of such matters I confess I am no judge."

"Then in that case it ought to be Augusta, for many reasons."

"What are the reasons?"

"I think she and Fitzmaur seem to go together in every one's mind. I have noticed that

people look pleased when they play or dance together; and Lady Charles always looks particularly happy, and whispers that they make a nice little pair, or something to that effect; so that for her to be his queen would be very suitable, and would, I think, give general satisfaction. It would be the next best thing to Mary's having that post of honour. Then, both Mary and Augusta are used to crowds of people, and to move about drawing-rooms, and so would do their parts much more gracefully than I should. There are several things for the queen to do, that ought to be done gracefully and with courage, such as receiving every body's salutations, arranging the dances, distributing the nosegays, and such like."

"I quite wonder how my little Alice will conduct herself in such weighty matters. I must admit it would have been more suitable to have assigned the office to one of your companions; but still, if they have so arranged it, and seem to wish it, I think it is better not to oppose your will to theirs. It is a much better exercise of humility to allow yourself to be disposed of at the pleasure of others, than to assert your determination of taking a lower place than the one assigned to you. Then if you play your part rather more awkwardly than they would

have done, it is a good discipline to self-love, a check to vanity; the wish to be admired in what you do should be the last ever present to your thoughts."

"Oh yes, dear father, it would be strange indeed if I were to set about trying to be admired. But I am very sorry you wish me to be queen; for I had fully made up my mind to persuade Fitzmaur to change his plan, and have one of the others."

"I shall be very much displeased, Alice, if you do. I am disappointed to see that you have made no efforts to conquer that fault I have so often told you of,—that shrinking timidity, which some fancy is very interesting and amiable. But such timidity does not proceed from humility; on the contrary, it betrays a pride which cannot bear to do anything in which one knows one cannot shine, and an indolence which refuses to make the necessary exertion for throwing off feelings of disinclination to the pleasure of others. To indulge this foible, you are willing to thwart your friend and derange his plans on his birthday, the day when he naturally expects to be a little indulged; when, on the contrary, you ought to be particularly goodnatured to him, remembering that you were the cause, though quite an innocent

cause, of a great disappointment to him not long ago, and of much grief and trouble."

Poor Alice! this was an unfortunate turn for the subject to take. She had gained no assistance from her father—quite the reverse; for now she had to bring him, as well as Fitzmaur, round to her way of thinking, and this without explaining her reasons.

"Nevertheless, I am confident that in this one instance I am right," said she to herself, as she retired to rest, "and I am sure my father would think me right if he knew all; so I must try to make him trust me without knowing all; and I shall persevere."

But then when she thought over his arguments, the prospect of vexing Fitzmaur appeared to her more grievous than ever; and she felt sure it would vex him; not because she imagined herself to be so much an object of preference, but because she knew he hated to be contradicted in matters of that sort.

"If I could but hit upon something that would make him change his mind, without having positively to refuse him!" thought she to herself; "perhaps Nursey can help me."

"Nursey," said the child, as the favourite old servant was performing those little offices which to her were more a task of love than of

servitude, "what should you say, supposing people wanted to make you a queen, and you did not wish to be one?"

"Make me a queen!" exclaimed the astonished woman; "bless your little heart, what will you think of next?"

"Yes, but do tell me, dear," persevered the child; "what would you say, supposing a king asked you to be his queen?"

"I should drop a curtsy, and say, No, thank your majesty, I had rather not."

Alice laughed. "But suppose he persevered, and begged you very much; which I am sure he would do, if he knew what a dear old Nursey you are," she continued, stroking the fond face that was stooping over her crib.

"I should answer, dropping another curtsy, Please your majesty, you ought to think about your people's pleasure as well as your own, and I am sure they would not thank you for giving them an old nobody, like me, for a queen."

Alice kissed her nurse, and wished her good night, and then it struck her that some such answer as that might do for her purpose. Why should she not tell Fitzmaur that he ought to consult the pleasure of all his company, rich and poor, as well as his own? Something of that sort she was resolved to say.

"Extraordinary child!" muttered Nurse Roberts to herself all the way down stairs—"Extraordinary child! what can she have taken into her head now?" The good old woman had long been in the habit of treasuring up every saying of her charge's as containing some profound wisdom far beyond her years; and now, with a most solemn shake of the head, she said to the cook, to whom she generally disclosed her prognostications respecting Alice's future life, "Most extraordinary child, that Miss Alice!"

"Extraordinary indeed," replied the ruler of jack and spit, "she never comes home without bringing half a dozen beggars with her to dirty my kitchen-floor; and his Reverence never thinks of saying nay to her."

"Say nay to Miss Alice!" exclaimed the other with unfeigned astonishment; "well, I wonder how you can be thinking of your kitchen-floor, when you may remember it was by her little coaxing ways that she got you leave to keep your place, which you were so near losing last year. Suppose his Reverence had said nay to her then?"

"Too true," was the answer to this forcible appeal; "there's no saying a word against Miss Alice,—I had rather give an extra scour to the floor than thwart her wishes."

"Mark my words," said the nurse, "she will be a wonderful person in her day; unless indeed," with another most solemn shake of the head, "she is too clever to live; which God forbid!"

And now, how did Alice manage her little manœuvre next day? It was not very difficult to persuade her fond father that she was acting right in this instance; he readily took her at her word; for he had never known her unwilling to acknowledge herself wrong, when she was so. But it was a more arduous task to induce Fitzmaur to give up his project: he protested, he got angry, he called Alice whimsical and disobliging, he answered all her objections most plausibly; in short, he probably would have forced her to the ungracious office of flatly refusing, had she not in the gentlest way suggested to him, that this would be a capital opportunity for a little self-denial. She did not arrogantly attempt to advise or dictate—she merely hinted it to him, in a pretty little way, that no one could be offended at. This had the desired effect. Fitzmaur paused a moment, reflected, sighed, grumbled out that it was very hard, then yielded, and agreed that Mary should be queen.

Now one more point remains, and Alice will have succeeded to her heart's content. Fitz-

maur must seek his sister, kiss her, and make up their little quarrel; "for," added Alice, "you really *did* tease her a little yesterday." Moreover, he must take care not to let her perceive that the change came from a third person; he must make her the offer as from himself, and with a kind affectionate manner,—for it would make Mary very happy to receive such a proof of kindness from her own dear brother; and so in fact it did. Mary knew nothing of what had passed—she was pleased and delighted, not so much at the prospect of being queen of the day, as at perceiving her error in thinking that her own bonny Fitzmaur wished to shove her out of her place. When she saw Alice's merry face looking so glad to see her happy, she reproached herself very much for having for an instant harboured unkind feelings towards her, and wished she could recall them. She wondered how she could ever have objected to see her dear friend in a better place than herself. And probably the poor girl never would have had the feelings she now repented of, had she not been spurred on to them by another. Fitzmaur, too, was happy; every one must be so who has yielded his wishes to another. He dearly loved his sister; and when he saw how gratified she was by his kindness, he said to

himself, "After all, it is much better to have Mary for my queen."

And was not Alice happy, when she saw that sunshine had broken through the clouds, and that bright smiles lit up the faces of her companions? Young reader, look into the Holy Volume, and there find of whom it is said that they are "blessed, for they shall be called the children of God;" and that will give you Alice's encomium and her reward.

We will say nothing of Augusta's feelings. We cannot believe that she was in reality better pleased to see Mary queen than Alice; we know what her secret desire had been all along. It is melancholy to perceive how many bad feelings spring from that one of self-love. She could not, however, now, in any decency, make further complaints; only she looked sullen and supercilious. Judging, moreover, of others by herself, and knowing nothing of what had passed between Alice and Fitzmaur, she expected to see the former look very mortified at that which she supposed to be a regular downfal. And as she could not restrain a sensation of petty triumph over a fallen rival, she dropped sundry hints about people who push themselves forward, finding themselves set down; and then she expected to see Alice look disconcerted.

But her remarks made no deeper impression on the innocent mind at which they were directed, than the shadow of a passing cloud upon the sand. Totally at a loss, and quite unable to read the expression of Alice's eyes, Augusta was forced to own herself perplexed; and perhaps her exclamation that night to her maid will give us some notion of the cause of her perplexity: "What a strange girl that Alice is! I cannot make her out. I am sometimes *afraid* of quarrelling with her; there is now and then something about her that seems to be MORE than a little girl."

CHAPTER V.

THE BIRD'S CAGE.

"WHAT can be the reason that Alice comes so seldom to us now, and stays so short a time?" said Mary, who had just, with much reluctance, allowed her friend to go home, having in vain tried to detain her.

"Yes," replied Augusta, "she has been very little here this last week; but I suppose her father keeps her."

"No, that he does not," said Edward, who came into the room that minute; "for I have just met him; and when I made a desperate attack upon him, accusing him of keeping away Alice, he told me he had nothing to do with it, and that I must settle the matter with her. I told him then, that she had been here to-day for the first time this week, and that she has only stayed an hour, instead of the whole afternoon."

"And what did he answer?" inquired his sister.

"He said again, that he had nothing to do with it, and then rode on," Edward replied.

"Well, if he had not assured you that he had nothing to do with it," said Augusta, "I should certainly have supposed that she remained away by his orders; for I had taken it into my head, she had got into some scrape with him."

"Alice in a scrape!" exclaimed Edward; "who ever heard of such a thing? what put such a notion into your head?"

"How ridiculous you all are about that child!" cried Augusta; "why should she not be in a scrape sometimes, as well as any one else?"

"As well as Augusta Fitzmaur, for instance," said the provoking Edward, with a sly leer out of the corner of his eye.

"How rude you are!" said Augusta, looking annoyed.

But Mary interrupted her by saying, "Pray do not begin quarrelling; but tell us, Augusta, why you thought Alice was in a scrape."

"You may remember," returned her cousin, "that the last time she was here was on Friday. The following Sunday, as we were returning from church, and she was walking part of the way with us, mamma and some one else were talking about visiting the poor; and then Uncle John, happening to hear them, seized Alice by the

shoulder, and roared out, in his great loud voice, 'This little lass is the *sœur de la charité* of the parish—she does more good than a whole convent of 'em.' Well, did you not remark that she looked confused?"

"I am sure it is no wonder," said Mary; "a touch from Uncle John, particularly accompanied by his wonted roar, is enough to make one jump a yard high."

"Besides," said Edward, "she always gets red when she is praised; indeed, she generally blushes if she is spoken to at all."

"Yes; but on this occasion she did more than blush," continued Augusta; "she looked up at her father, quite frightened, as you might have observed, and shrunk behind the rest of the party; and when I looked into her face to see what was the matter with her, a large tear was resting on her eyelash."

"O poor little Alice! dear little Alice!" exclaimed the others simultaneously; "what could have been the cause?"

In an upper room in the Rectory, which looked upon the garden, at a large deal table stood that worthy personage, who has once or twice come before the reader, Nurse Roberts. She was ironing, literally, one may say, with all her might; and as she completed the laborious

task, she handed each article, looking as smooth and white as her own starched cap and neckerchief, to her helpmate the cook, to fold and lay aside. Conversation, or that exchange of words which sometimes usurps the name, had not flagged between the two respectable dames during this domestic employment; when all of a sudden the good nurse made a dead pause, with iron poised in air, and mouth wide open, as if in attitude of eager listening. The curiosity of her fellow-labourer was not allayed by the emphatic "La!" which escaped at last, followed by, "Well, I do declare, I hear Miss Alice's step upon the stairs."

"Perhaps you do, and what then?" not unnaturally inquired the other.

"It's awful," solemnly replied the nurse, resuming her work, and shaking her head.

"What's awful?" asked the cook; but before an answer could be given, the door opened, and, in truth, it was Alice, who came skipping in, hung her bonnet on a peg, and, jumping on the window-seat, placed her basket on her knees, and began plying her needle as hard as she could.

"Miss Alice!" exclaimed the faithful guardian, pursing up her lips and trying to look mightily displeased, "Miss Alice, I thought I left you at the castle."

"So you did, Nursey dear," said the little girl; "but I did not promise you to remain there for ever."

"You have worked too much, Miss Alice; I told you so this morning—*too much*," the nurse continued, more emphatically; "and I beg you will put away your work,—it is very bad for you."

"I must just finish this shirt, and this frock, and this pinafore," replied Alice.

The good old dame shook her head, and looked as if not even her young favourite's pleading eyes could relax her stern features into a smile. But the urgent expostulation which was about to be made was checked by the sound of Mr. Russell's voice below stairs asking for his daughter. He came up and opened the door, just as Mrs. Roberts was beginning to explain to her charge scientifically the bad effects of too close application upon the eyes, the lungs, the heart, the digestive organs, &c. &c.

"Ah, sir!" exclaimed she, directly her loved master entered the room, "you may well come here to look for Miss Alice—she is never to be found any where else. The whole of this blessed week has she sat there upon that window-seat, with her knees up to her chin, stitching away as if for her life. No constitution will stand it,

sir; I tell you the truth, upon my word. It's of no use in life taking her to the castle to have a good game of play; she's back as quick as one can count ten, and again at her post. And not only does she work all day instead of playing, but she gets up an hour earlier than usual for the same purpose—no power can keep her in bed. I am sure, sir, it will be the death of her."

"What makes you so very busy, my child?" said Mr. Russell, turning to his daughter.

The child made no reply, but by raising her large eyes and fixing them upon his. It is said there is an eloquence in silence, and one might feel disposed to think there was such in Alice Russell's; for, as if he had received a most satisfactory answer, with an affectionate smile and a kind "God bless you," her father left her as he found her.

"Well, was the like o' that ever seen!" exclaimed Nurse Roberts; "to be sure his Reverence must know best . . . but," she added, with one of her solemn shakes of the head, "it's not them big books he pores over all day that will help him to rear a motherless babe."

But perhaps Alice's silent answer will not satisfy all parties so easily as it appears to have done her father; and some for whom this brief

memorial is intended may think they have a good right to demand what Alice could possibly have to do, which made her rise an hour earlier than usual, and induced her to absent herself from her loved friends at the castle. To this most reasonable demand a reply must be given, though thereby it will be needful to exhibit the human frailty of our little favourite; and to remind the young reader that she was not the heroine of romance, whose character is always depicted as one of unnatural perfection, —but a little pilgrim, struggling onwards to a better world through trials and weaknesses. She had, like the rest of us, her own peculiar temptations; it is impossible, therefore, but that she should sometimes have erred.

It was about a day after the events recorded in the last chapter, when Alice was summoned in from the garden by her nurse, to look at a present which had just been sent to her by a distant friend.

"It is something that will amuse you very much," said the kind woman, delighted to watch her eager curiosity; "it will talk to you when I am too busy, and your father is out."

"Talk to me!" exclaimed the delighted child; "what can it be?"

She lost no time in ascertaining—it was a

beautiful green parrot, which called out directly she spoke to it, as it had been trained to do, "Pretty poll! Pretty Alice!" The little girl was in ecstacy; "I will teach it to say, 'Dear father,'" she said, "and then it will be quite a companion." But after she had talked to it and admired it for nearly half an hour, a new want occurred to her. The cage in which it had been sent was too small, and not at all of the right sort for a parrot—it had no swing, and all parrots have a swing in their cages. Altogether it would not answer; but what was to be done for another?

"I saw a beautiful cage with a swing, which would just do," said her nurse, "in a shop-window the other day; but it cost ten shillings."

"How could I possibly get ten shillings?" asked poor Alice, looking rather disconsolate.

"Do you not think your father would give it to you, if you asked him?" inquired the other.

"I *could* not ask him," she replied; "he gave me some money a short time ago, and I *could* not ask him for any more. I am sure he has other things to do with his money than to spend it on birds' cages."

"But perhaps, if you were to shew him your parrot in this ugly cage, he would immediately

think you wanted a better one," said the nurse, who was, on this occasion, more fond than judicious.

"Ah, if he would do that," Alice answered thoughtfully, "if he would, I should be so very glad; but I do not think he will—no, it will never come into his head that a parrot wants a swing, for I am sure it is not in any book."

The child was right in her conjecture; for when, with a mixture of pleasure and anxiety, she shewed her parrot to her father, the notion of a better cage certainly never occurred to him; and perhaps it would be found, if the truth were known, that the only interest the bird had in his eyes was the amusement it afforded his little daughter.

Alice was disappointed. It would have been better for her to have asked at once for what she wanted—for with so fond a father there should be no reserve—but that shrinking timidity, which was hinted at in the preceding chapter, was one of her few weaknesses; the fear of giving pain, or of encroaching upon kindness already received, often made her silent, when it would have been better to speak out. The only vent she gave to her disappointment was when, a little while after, her father being engaged in writing, and she in solitary meditations on birds' cages, she

involuntarily exclaimed, "How pleasant it must be to be rich!"

"I daresay it is, my love," replied Mr. Russell, without taking his eyes from his paper; "but as I never was rich, I cannot tell you."

It suddenly occurred to Alice that her friend Mary Fitzmaur had a cage that would just suit her purpose. Mary never used it; for the bird to which it belonged had died some time ago, and the cage had remained ever since as useless lumber. But then Alice debated with herself, whether she could ask for it. No, she *could not* bring herself to ask for it, though she knew Mary did not want it: if she was loath to ask her own kind father, much less any one else. But then, thought she, "if I tell her about my parrot, and how much it wants a new cage, she will think immediately of giving me hers, for she is so goodnatured."

Very true it was that Mary was goodnatured; perhaps there never lived a little girl more thoroughly free from selfishness; nevertheless, unluckily she did not on this occasion think about the bird's cage. Her thoughts were occupied with other matters, which shall be explained.

Probably the young reader will recollect mention having been made of a certain personage called Uncle John, and that it was stated,

in the first chapter, that he was expected by his nephews and nieces in a few days. His coming, it may be remembered, was joyfully hailed by the juvenile party; and sundry expectations were expressed of presents, which were wont to be made on such occasions. The casual remark recorded to have been made by Augusta, in the beginning of this chapter, proves that this welcome friend had already arrived. He came the evening previous to the day we are now talking of, on which Alice received her parrot; and it happened that same afternoon, when she, full of one idea, repaired to the castle, that she found all the longed-for presents spread upon a table; while her friends, eager with delight, were alternately admiring the gifts, and embracing the kind giver. A beautiful bracelet had been assigned to Mary, to Augusta a pair of ear-rings, and all the boys had suitable presents, according to their tastes and ages. Nothing could be thought of for a long while but the new treasures. Alice's arrival was but the acquisition of a fresh admirer; and for the latter it must be admitted that, for some time, she forgot herself and her wishes, and joined heartily in the pleasure of her companions. Still, a little later, after she had clasped and unclasped the bracelet, and turned the ear-rings round

and round a hundred times, expressing due admiration, when the recollection of her own little want crossed her mind, and, expecting a return of the sympathy she had shewn, she told her friend of her present, and of the extreme inconvenience of the cage, and Mary merely answered, "Oh, I am glad you have got a bird; but do you not wish it was a bracelet?" then, it must be confessed, Alice felt a little hurt.

Mary's answer proceeded from thoughtlessness, not from selfishness; her mind was so taken up with one subject, that she had no room for another; she did not recollect her own empty cage; and it never occurred to her, that her friend might find greater difficulty in procuring a trifle of the sort than she would do. But Alice made no allowance of this kind; she felt grieved and mortified—glad she had made no direct request—resolved to ask no favours; for she was slightly nettled. She felt as if she stood alone—as if no one cared for her little wants and pleasures. She looked upon all the beautiful things, none of which were for her, and thought within herself, "Probably these have cost many pounds, whereas ten shillings would procure all I wish for; the very thing which would make me happy is lying useless in a lumber-room, yet

no one gives it to me." And then the feeling, which so many poorer, so many richer than Alice Russell, have indulged, crossed her little mind—"How small a portion of the superfluous wealth of this house would procure for me all I desire!" Alas! this little discontent led on, as is invariably the case, to other bad feelings. She then wronged her poor friend Mary, and judged her harshly: "Mary does not think of me when she is happy; because she has so many beautiful things, and this pretty bracelet, she is become selfish."

The great evil of censuring the conduct of others is, that one naturally begins to think favourably of oneself; and Alice, all the time she was walking home, was thinking how differently she would have acted in Mary's place.

"How very selfish all rich people are!" exclaimed she to her father that evening.

"Why, my child, that is a sweeping accusation," he replied; "it was but this morning you thought it must be pleasant to be rich; am I to infer that you would think it pleasant to be selfish?"

"No," said Alice, a little taken aback by her own inconsistency; "but I did not know then how selfish rich people were."

"And what has opened your eyes to the

fact, or what you assume to be such?" again inquired her father, looking earnestly at her.

Alice was silent; but her anxious parent drew her towards him, and, placing his arm round her waist, insisted upon her telling him what had given rise to her uncharitable observation. The child then told him all the particulars of the bird's cage.

"Why did you not ask me for ten shillings to buy the bird's cage?" asked her father.

"I was afraid you could not afford it," replied Alice.

"But then, would it not have been better to have ascertained that point, or else to have resigned yourself to the evil, and have made up your mind to it?"

"Oh, but I wished for it so very much!" was the only answer Alice could return at that moment.

Mr. Russell looked grave and rather sorrowful; and then added, "It is very good for us sometimes to have our wishes thwarted—to be in want of things and not to be able to procure them: this is very useful indeed, if we school our tempers; but if we murmur and repine, it does us harm. I had rather put myself to any inconvenience, than that my child should learn to envy those who are better off than herself.

You may remember I promised the other day to give you a book; it would have cost just ten shillings,—here is the money; you may dispose of it as you please." So saying, he laid half a sovereign upon the table, adding, "I shall talk to you about this when your thoughts are more disengaged."

At any other time her father's serious remark would have made the thoughtful Alice pause before she seized the wished-for gift, and then she would have had time to observe the sorrowful look with which it was made. But at this moment her mind was engrossed by one idea—a bird's cage; her heart was bent upon this one object, so that she could think of nothing else. She jumped for joy at the prospect, kissed and thanked her father; then seizing the money, she bounded up stairs, calling out at the top of her voice, "Nursey, Nursey, we will go to-morrow the *first thing* to buy the bird's cage."

When Alice returned to wish her father good night, she did not notice the grave manner in which he spoke to her. How was this? she who was wont to watch his smiles, and read his eyes. She was thinking of the bird's cage. See how sad it is to desire any thing inordinately. How innocent soever the object of our wishes may be in itself, it becomes harmful to us directly

we long for it too much. The mind becomes cramped, so that it cannot perform all its functions, when it has been bent too long upon one object; just as the limbs will sometimes be cramped when they have remained for a length of time in one position.

The next day was fine; and Alice could hardly wait till breakfast was over and her lessons learned, before she begged of Nurse Roberts to walk with her to the shop. The indulgent nurse equipped herself as fast as she could, but it was difficult to keep pace with her bounding, skipping companion.

The town of N— was about two miles distant. Before Alice and her nurse had reached it, they were accosted by a poor girl in very ragged clothes and barefoot; she looked pale and ill, and her voice faltered as she spoke. Alice stood still immediately; and the poor girl asked her if, for the love of God, she could do something to help her poor mother.

"We are not used to begging, indeed we are not, miss; my poor mother knew better days before father died,—since that we have been badly off; but we got on pretty well till Johnny took ill; and now, God help us, I do not know what we shall do."

Alice felt sorry, and asked who Johnny was.

"Johnny is my eldest brother, and he has worked hard for us as long as he could; but now he has been ill these two months, and mother's had to give all our money in doctor's physic, and the rent is owing next month, and how we are to pay it God knows: mother has just had to sell some of our clothes to pay the bread-bill, for the man would not wait any longer. And now we do not know how to get another meal, and the children are crying for something to eat; indeed, we are all very hungry," and her lips quivered as she said this.

Alice inquired where she lived; adding, she was sure her father would send her some food when he heard all this.

"My name is Ellen Barton; we live some way from his Reverence's house," answered the suppliant, "on the other side of the river."

"Well, do not cry, poor girl," said Alice; "I will not fail to speak to my father directly I get home, and I am quite sure he will send you food, and something good for your brother; and I am certain he will think of some way of helping you with your rent: so pray do not fret. I shall not see my father immediately, for I am going into the town to buy a bird's cage; but directly I get home, you may depend upon my speaking to him about you."

The girl curtsied and passed on. Alice, too, went on, quickening her movements, eager to purchase her longed-for treasure; but not without sincerely commiserating the poor girl who had just spoken to her, and talking over with her nurse various plans for their relief.

At last the cage is purchased, and the little girl returns in great glee: she runs up to her room and caresses her parrot, saying, "Pretty poll;" and the bird answers, as it had been taught, "Pretty Alice." She entices it into the new cage, and in a few minutes has the pleasure of seeing it swinging backwards and forwards, making sundry noises expressive of its enjoyment. Alice clapped her hands in delight. To do her justice, however, she was but a few minutes thus engaged, before she remembered her promise to Ellen Barton, and went to find her father.

"Father, I have heard such a sad story from a poor girl named Ellen Barton; she wants relief; her mother is very poor; have you time to attend to it now?"

"Certainly," said the clergyman, laying down his pen.

Alice repeated to him word for word the tale of distress; and asked him if he would send the family some nourishment.

"I will, of course," replied her father; "but

what did you answer when she had opened her grief to you?"

Alice gave her own reply without hesitation.

"Is that all you said?" asked Mr. Russell.

"That is all," replied his daughter.

"I suppose you did not hear her make any remark as she walked away?" continued he.

"No," said Alice; "what do you think she said?"

"I thought," Mr. Russell answered, "that perhaps she might have muttered to herself, How very selfish all clergymen's daughters are! But I conclude she was too charitable to judge her neighbour harshly."

Alice stood as if a thunderbolt had fallen upon her. She clearly understood her father's meaning; and the deep crimson which overspread her features shewed that no further reproof was needed just then. It would be greatly wronging Alice to suppose that her momentary selfishness was deliberate. No, had she reflected at all on the line of conduct she ought to pursue at the time Ellen Barton was talking to her, her accustomed piety and charity forbid us to doubt that she would have renounced her project, and bestowed the half-sovereign upon the destitute family. But, to speak plainly, *it never*

occurred to her; she was not intentionally selfish; but she was suffering from the natural consequences of having allowed her desires to fix themselves too strongly on one object. She had longed for the cage so ardently, that when it was within her grasp, the notion of relinquishing it never crossed her mind. But now the extent of her error was present before her eyes. Her presumptuous censures of others, her double fault in falling into the same sin she had condemned in them, her unkind neglect of the poverty of one of Christ's little ones,—all flashed upon her. And then the warning words and look of her dear father, which, in her folly, she had disregarded at the time, came to her recollection. Poor Alice hid her face, and sobbed aloud.

Her father pitied his child when he saw her distress, and drew her within his arms; but he could not comfort her by lessening her fault in her own eyes—that would have been neither judicious nor truthful. He told her to go and think over it in her own room, while he went to visit the poor family of Ellen Barton. Alice could not answer a word; she hurried, glad to be released, to her little room; and there, unchecked, she cried bitterly. She could not bear to look at her parrot in its bright new cage

—it seemed to taunt her with her fault; so she put it outside the door. Her kind old nurse, coming in at that moment, was in consternation at the sight of her favourite leaning against the pillow of her bed, and sobbing as if her heart would break. She hastened to her side, and, calling her all the most endearing names, asked her what grieved her.

"Oh, leave me, Nursey!" sobbed the child; "I am very, very wicked."

Nurse Roberts stood motionless for a minute; then, as she slowly left the room, she muttered, "The Lord ha' mercy on the like o' me, if that innocent babe is a sinner!" Nevertheless she did not attempt to decoy Alice from her penitent attitude, concluding that Mr. Russell had reprimanded her for something: much as she doted on her, she had too much principle and good sense ever to interfere when her master was displeased with his daughter; which, it must be added, was rather a rare occurrence. The only nurse-like tenderness she gave way to, on the present occasion, was in cutting a slice of cake, and laying it carefully by, "to cheer her a bit when it was all over."

In the mean while Alice sat for some time crying, and thinking over her fault. I have already mentioned a particular print which hung

over the table at which she was accustomed to say her prayers, and which was her especial favourite. It represented Christ blessing children; and there were the figures of several children, in different positions and at various distances, clustering round the Holy Saviour. Now Alice was wont to single out of the group one particular child, whom she said must be the happiest; it was the one nearest to Christ, who was touching His raiment, and on whose head the blessed hand rested. Alice used to look at this picture over and over again, and try to imagine that she was that one happiest of all those happy children. But at this sad moment, when, as usual, her eyes rested on her picture, she felt (and this thought redoubled her grief) that she could not possibly be any longer one of that group; or, if she was in it at all, she must be the one farthest off, who seemed to be quite on the outside, not near enough to be noticed. But then Alice remembered the possibility of being restored to that happy place; and this recollection brought her to her knees, and long and fervently did the penitent child pray to be forgiven.

It was a little while after this that Alice came to the resolution of assisting the distressed family in the only way that remained to her.

She had no more money, so she could not relieve them by alms; but she might give them her time. She recollected that Ellen had told her that her mother had been compelled to sell the children's clothes to pay the bread-bill; she might work hard to replace those clothes. She resolved to give up all her playtime, and to rise an hour earlier every morning, till she had finished this task. It was Mr. Russell's custom to keep by him a store of materials for clothing the poor, under Nurse Roberts' superintendence, who generally gave out the work to those who wished to earn a little by their own industry—always, however, by Mr. Russell's express desire, reserving a small portion to be done by Alice. All that she had, therefore, to do, was to ask for a larger portion of work for herself from this store; and this she did at once, that same evening; and having performed this, she felt considerably happier.

Upon seeing her so diligently employed that evening, and upon learning what her occupation was, Mr. Russell felt pleased; and his pleasure pretty nearly completed Alice's happiness. He promised, moreover, that she should go with him the next morning to visit the family, and ascertain the exact sizes of the children.

The next day Alice did not fail to remind

her father of his promise, nor he to perform it; so they went together. The cottage was at some distance, in a glen on the other side of the river. On entering it they found the poor widow stooping over a very small fire, boiling a pot of broth with which Mr. Russell had supplied her. She looked wretchedly ill; and when, having warmed the nourishment, she carried it to the pallet of straw on which her son was stretched, and hung over him, soothing him, and coaxing him to eat the food she had prepared, her face looked more ghastly than ever by the side of his flushed cheek. A threadbare blanket formed his only covering, though the chilliness of fever was upon him. Two or three children—verifying, by their half-naked appearance, their sister's statement—were seated on the ground, rolling pebbles for marbles, and every now and then looking wistfully up at the broth so little relished by their sick brother, while a "hush" from their eldest sister checked their little voices, whenever for a short moment they forgot their own distress and his illness in the merriment of childhood. Yet, in spite of the abject poverty of their appearance, they were clean; and there was an attempt at tidiness in the room, which contrasted strangely with its wretchedness.

When the door opened, Ellen Barton took

her post by the sick bed; while her mother came forward to receive Mr. Russell, and gave him a chair. She did this without speaking; and when the clergyman asked her how her son was, she replied, "The hand of God is heavy upon him!" and, covering her face, rocked herself backwards and forwards on her chair, with a low moan.

"Mother, mother, don't take on so!" said the boy, raising his eyes, which seemed lit up with a dying glare; "please God, I shall be well soon."

Mr. Russell, drawing near to the poor woman, endeavoured, in a low tone, to pour comfort into her heart; but she seemed to reject all consolation, still continuing to rock on her chair, and answering, "The hand of God is heavy on us, sir."

"Will you not, then, bow beneath the hand of God?" inquired the clergyman, whose practised eye quickly perceived that the tender plant she was nurturing would never bloom again on this lower soil; "will you not try to receive willingly from the hand of God whatever He is pleased to send, whether good or ill?"

"Sir," said the woman, almost wildly, "He may take all; He may take my cottage, my poor pittance of food; nay, He may take those

babes—they will be happier gone; but I cannot spare my son—my Johnny; He must not take my son!"

"And if He took your son," continued the clergyman, in a soothing tone, "would He be taking more than He Himself gave for you?"

The woman pressed her hands upon her bosom, and answered nothing. Mr. Russell spoke a few words more to her, in a voice too low for others to hear; and then opening a small book embellished with engravings, he shewed her one representing the Son of Man in all His agony, and asked her if any thing she had yet endured equalled His sufferings.

The poor woman seemed moved, and with tears acknowledged that Christ had borne more for her than she had ever endured. "It is not against the good God that I would murmur," she added,—"may He forgive me if I have done so,—but indeed, sir, when His hand is heavy upon us, maybe sometimes one says a word one should not say."

Mr. Russell still continued to address her in a tone of comfort; but added, "You know, as I told you yesterday, if you had not allowed a feeling of false shame to prevent your coming to me when first your troubles came upon you, you would not have been reduced to such distress.

But I will not say more on that subject now, as we talked about it yesterday."

"Ah, sir, it's hard to beg, when one has known better days!" replied Widow Barton. "Before my husband died—and that's four years ago, come next Michaelmas—I never knew a day's want; and even since that, I have never been to say actually in want till now, thanks to my own dear boy. He has worked hard for us, sir; indeed he has. Every night I felt proud of him as he returned from his day's work, light-hearted, and looking beautiful with health and innocence. We lived hard, sir; but what of that? we were happy. I was able to keep my children in food, and in decent clothing to send them to the parish school. But two months ago he had to work at the draining of a pond; and he got wet through, and stood in his wet clothes all day, and I think they were not properly dry next morning, for he did not tell me that he had been wet, thinking nothing of it. Well, the next day he had a cold and a chilliness, which I am told was fever; but he went out still to work, because he would not that his mother should want for any thing; and then he got a cough, which settled deep upon his chest. He lay-by for a week; but then he went to work again, thinking himself better.

He battled against sickness, till it conquered him quite; and now he's laid low, and God knows when he will rise again!"

"Should it please God to take your son, will it not comfort you to think he has been a good, dutiful boy?" asked Mr. Russell.

"O my Johnny!" exclaimed the unhappy mother. "Yes, sir, you may well call him a dutiful boy: I should not be alive now but for him. When my husband died, I, like a wicked woman as I was, wrung my hands, and said I had nothing to live for, and so there was no use in living. 'And have you not us to live for, mother dear?' said he, coming and kissing away my tears; 'will you not live for us? I mean to live for you, and I will work for you, and soon the little ones will be big, and able to work too. We shall see bright days yet, mother.' So he comforted me, till I was ashamed of requiring to be taught by my own child; so I cheered up. And since that, many a time he has cheered me when I have been cast down. But now, surely, he will cheer me no more; and who will comfort me when he is gone?"

"Mother always takes on so," said the sick boy, as Mr. Russell approached his bed, "when she talks of my illness. I hope, sir, you will not think bad of it; for indeed I fear she is

weakened by want and watching. She gets no sleep o' nights, watching by me; and many a day she has only had a crust of bread to support her, to let the children have what little food she could procure."

"I feel most unhappy to think of the distress you have endured," said Mr. Russell; "I hope you will never again go on so long without making your wants known."

"Sir," replied the youth, in a subdued voice, "I shall never go on long any way; and I pray you, for the love of God, be kind to my mother when I am dead. I dare not tell her the truth; but I feel it within me, I am not long for this world."

Mrs. Barton, who had only heard Mr. Russell's remark, and not her son's answer, replied: "It's true, sir, I ought, for my children's sake, to have run the risk of hard words, and have asked for help. But what's the use of applying at the doors of the rich? Oftentimes they will give nothing—(to be sure, if I had known how kind you were, sir, I should have thought differently),—or if they do vouchsafe to give a little help, it is *so* little that one is ashamed of having asked for it; while the price of a single ornamented table from their well-furnished rooms—which, if they lost, they would forget

they ever had—would save a whole family from ruin."

These words struck heavily on Alice's heart; they reminded her of her own feelings a short time ago; and she was more ashamed than ever of the over-eagerness she had indulged in the pursuit of a trifle.

Mr. Russell, having promised poor Johnny Barton to visit him frequently, and exhorted his mother to patience and resignation, took his little daughter by the hand, and led her away.

Alice spoke hardly a word during her walk home. Her heart was full; and a few tears fell silently as she thought of her momentary selfishness. All that afternoon she worked diligently, and all the next day and all the week; and so perseveringly did she labour, that towards the end of the week she had nearly finished clothes for the three children.

And now, perhaps, a sufficient answer has been given to the wondering questions of the little Fitzmaurs, who of course knew nothing of what had passed, and who only regretted the absence of their friend. Perhaps, too, Mr. Russell's silence, after Nurse Roberts' expostulation, will no longer be a cause of astonishment. And the young reader, who has ever experienced heart-

felt sorrow after the commission of a fault, will readily sympathise with the shuddering timidity which excited Augusta's attention when Alice was praised for works of charity: while, on the other hand, if he be a stranger to such sorrow, he cannot sympathise with Alice; for if there be one point more difficult than another for the thoughtless to appreciate, it is the *penitence of the saints.*

I shall not regret having betrayed this error into which our little favourite fell, if thereby one child be led to understand how a Christian may fall and rise again.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LADY OF THE MIDDLE AGES.

ALICE RUSSELL'S self-imposed task was nearly completed towards the end of the week, when she was surprised by the entrance of her three friends from the castle one afternoon, and still more surprised to see Mary deliberately take off her bonnet and produce her work-bag, and the two boys throw themselves with much sang-froid into her father's arm-chair. Alice, as she bade them welcome, laughed at their cool sauciness.

"You see, Alice," said Mary, "if you are so very surly that you will not come to us, we are obliged to come to you."

"I am very glad to see you," replied the other; "I shall be delighted if you will spend an hour or two with me while I work."

"Pray, Mistress Alice," said Edward, "why have you been playing the cynic all this week?"

"I have not done so, to my knowledge," Alice answered.

"Well, then, why have you been playing Dame Notable?" continued Edward.

"The fact is," said Mary, "you are making clothes for the poor,—you are always doing something good."

Alice slightly shuddered, and exclaimed: "Hush! pray do not talk of that!"

"You strange girl," said Mary, staring her full in the face,—"most people like to be praised!"

"Surely not, when they do not deserve it!" returned the other.

"However, Mother Good," said Edward, "do not flatter yourself that we have come here for the sole purpose of watching you two young ladies stitching; though, to be sure, we thought you might require a little looking after. But the fact is, we hoped to have found Mr. Russell at home; we wanted to ask him some questions."

"I expect him home every minute," replied Alice; "he told me he was not going far: I daresay he will be happy to answer your questions."

"You know that portrait in the hall," said Fitzmaur, "that we call the gentle lady?"

"Yes," replied Alice, "the portrait of a lady in a black veil, with such gentle eyes and a fair skin like Mary's."

"Exactly," returned Fitzmaur; "we want to know all about her; and I daresay your father can tell us, for he knows every thing. We asked Uncle John; and he told us that she was a superstitious old woman, who washed people's sores."

"I must say," said Alice, "that was not telling you much."

"Well, then he added that she was a great friend of St. Anselm, who was a bigoted old papist who quarrelled with the king. Now, do you know much about St. Anselm? for I forget all I read."

"I read in my little book," replied Alice, "that he lived in the reigns of William Rufus and Henry I.; but I do not know much about him. Of course your uncle must know best, but does it not seem odd that he should have been all that, if he was *Saint* Anselm?"

"Why, it does certainly," Fitzmaur answered; "but Uncle John says, that in those days folks made more fuss about saints than we enlightened people do."

"Well, that is still more strange," said Alice, thoughtfully; "would it not seem natural that, if people made a great fuss about the saints, they should be very particular who they called saints?"

"I must say that *is* true," replied all the others unanimously.

"But still," continued Fitzmaur, after a pause, "it must have been wrong of him to quarrel with the king."

"Yes," Alice replied; "but . . . . you know there are two ways of telling a story. Suppose it *might* have been the king who quarrelled with St. Anselm; then it sounds quite as bad to have quarrelled with a bishop."

"So it does!" exclaimed the others.

"I do declare," cried Edward, "if you would not stitch all day, I should think you something of a clever girl!"

"At all events," continued Alice, "I think it makes one feel rather frightened to talk ill of a man who is called *saint*."

"It is very odd," replied Fitzmaur, "but just that idea occurred to me; but I did not say so, for fear Uncle John should laugh at me."

"Tell us exactly what your uncle said about the gentle lady," said Alice.

"All he knew about her," answered Fitzmaur, "was, that she was the daughter of the Baron De Courcy, who came over to England with William the Conqueror; and that her son, from whom we are descended, gave her a

great deal of trouble. He says that the portrait in the hall was not taken at the time, but was painted as late as two hundred years ago, from a picture of her in an old missal. It is very like that picture in features and expression; and it is supposed that it must be like her, from the resemblance to other members of the family. But for all other accounts Uncle John referred us to Mr. Russell, first, because he knows every thing; and secondly because, a long while ago, he wrote a little history of the gentle lady from some old book."

"I must say, Uncle John is very complimentary in the first of the two reasons he assigns," said a voice from the other side of the room; and on looking round, the children perceived their kind friend Mr. Russell. He had entered just in time for the close of Fitzmaur's speech; and was now fairly beset by his three little visitors—one taking his hat, that he might not go out again; another holding his hands, that he might not employ himself; and the third planting herself firmly on his knee, to prevent his rising from his chair. Thus imprisoned, he was informed that he could not expect to get free till he had given the required information respecting St. Anselm and the gentle lady.

"But how have you disposed of your cousin

Augusta," asked Mr. Russell, "while you indulge this sudden historical fit?"

"Augusta is slightly indisposed," answered Edward, mincing his voice, "and is reposing on the sofa in her mamma's room; while we, her bereaved cousins, are come to the Rectory for comfort under our temporary loss."

Mr. Russell then looked through a bureau full of papers, and produced a manuscript containing a brief history of the lady in question; but first he said that he would give them an outline of the life of St. Anselm, that they might judge for themselves of the dispute between him and the king.

Mr. Russell. "St. Anselm was an Italian by birth, and the son of illustrious parents. From his earliest youth religion was the first object of his heart; nay, so great was his love for God and the things of God, that he had a longing even in his childhood to renounce the world, and devote himself exclusively to works of religion. By this you know, of course, that I mean a monastic life; for in those days persons who desired to give themselves up to the service of the poor and to the cultivation of letters, retired to monasteries. Convents and monasteries offered a ready refuge to the poor or afflicted: they were the means of keeping thousands from

starvation; for in those days charity was always gratuitous—there was no law to *compel* people to maintain the poor, except the law of Christ; consequently whatever was done for them was done for His sake. They were also the depositories of learning; because, at a time when books were scarce, and the means of communication between persons at a distance very limited, it was a great convenience for learned men to congregate together in one place. Printing not being invented, the only way of multiplying books was by copying them out with the hand—a work much too laborious for persons to undertake who had many worldly cares besides, and only suitable to those who were content to lead a sedentary life, and to labour for the sole purpose of doing good. Many valuable manuscripts, besides the Bible, owe their preservation to the monks. To one of these religious houses Saint Anselm offered himself for admission, at the early age of fifteen; but his parents objecting, he was content to give up his wish. Obedience was his ruling principle, and it was that obedience which made him so uncompromising as a ruler; for those are always best fitted to command who have first, in their turn, obeyed. When he was twenty-seven years old, being then of an age

which gave him a right to choose his own profession, he followed the bent of his inclinations, and entered the abbey of Bec, in Normandy. He was certainly well adapted for a life of that kind; it suited his turn of mind much better than the turmoil of a public and elevated station, for he was naturally of a quiet, gentle disposition, fond of sedentary pursuits, and very learned. However, he was well adapted for any position; for the true secret of knowing how to fill any station well is, not so much the having a natural inclination towards that particular state of life, as the having a well-disciplined mind, trained to obey without disputing, and to do our duty in that state of life to which it may please God to call us. Such was St. Anselm. Having enjoyed peace and seclusion for thirty years, at the call of duty he tore himself away from his loved pursuits, to serve his Lord where He was pleased to be served. But first I must tell you what circumstances led to this change in his life. Lanfranc, who had been prior in the very abbey of which St. Anselm was now abbot, was afterwards made Archbishop of Canterbury. When he died, the king, William Rufus, instead of appointing a successor, left the see vacant for four years, and in the mean time seized upon the revenues. Nothing could be

worse than this; for all such possessions are solemnly consecrated to God,—and to take what is given to God is the worst kind of robbery, and is dreadful sacrilege. There can scarcely be a greater crime than the seizing upon such holy treasures—it is like defying the power of Almighty God,—and such ill-gotten wealth is sure to prove a curse, instead of a blessing. Of this awful crime, however, the king was guilty; and not only with the see of Canterbury, but his practice was to seize the revenues of all vacant bishoprics, and appropriate them to his own use. How long the king would have gone on in this reckless way, rushing headlong into perdition, it is impossible to say; but the chastening hand of God in mercy arrested him, and laid him low on the bed of sickness. Then conscience raised her voice, which had hitherto been drowned or disregarded; then remorse began to torture the humbled king, and sickness taught him what in health he refused to learn, namely, that there is no royal road to heaven, but that the prince and the beggar must alike tread the path of penitence and good works. When the fear of death was upon him, William remembered the vacant sees and the injury he had done the Church. It happened (so had God ordered events) that Anselm was in England at

the time the king fell sick, having been entreated by Hugh, Earl of Chester, to attend him during his illness. He was therefore able, when called for, to wait upon the king; and probably his admonitions brought him in some measure to repentance, for William entreated St. Anselm to undertake the office of Archbishop of Canterbury. At first the holy man refused: he felt that he was now on the wane of life, being past sixty years old; he felt, moreover, that the years of quiet he had been spending but ill fitted him to stem the stormy passions of such a man as William Rufus; in short, he felt that he was not adapted to the task. He did not, however, trust to his own judgment; but seeing that the king and many others were very urgent with him to accept the office, he referred himself for direction to his spiritual ruler the pope, representing to him how little qualified he was for so arduous a post. The pope commanded him to accept the archbishopric; and St. Anselm, with much regret but with a submissive mind, gave up his loved seclusion, and obeyed. But before he entered upon his new office, he insisted on the king's restoring the revenues of Canterbury, as they were in the time of Lanfranc; and with this most reasonable demand the king complied. He also warned William, that, as archbishop,

he should keep the vow of obedience he had, as Abbot of Bec, made to Pope Urban II.; and this he made to be fully understood before he assumed the episcopal office. Unfortunately, the repentance caused by fear does not often outlive the fear which produced it. When William recovered from his sickness, he began to fall back into his wicked ways; and then he found that the man who was so meek and quiet in his private character could be valiant as a lion in defending the Church of Christ. The first subject of dispute was, when William was going to make war upon his brother Robert. The king wanted money, and the archbishop offered him 500*l.* The king said this was not enough; but St. Anselm could not give him more without defrauding the Church; so he respectfully but firmly refused. The king was very angry; and when the archbishop went to him, just before he embarked for Normandy, to ask permission to call a synod to settle the disorders of the Church, the king refused; and treated St. Anselm so unkindly, that he was obliged to leave the court. The second quarrel was, when the archbishop wished to go to Rome to receive the pall from the hands of the pope. The pall was a woollen robe, which, after being consecrated by being laid upon the altar at St.

Peter's, was placed on the shoulders of an archbishop, to invest him with his dignity. Urban II. was at that time the rightful Pope; but there was another who called himself pope and asserted his claims; and King William pretended he had not made up his mind which was the right one. He was a proud rebellious man, who wished to rule over every thing, even over the Church; so he was very angry that the Archbishop should acknowledge Urban when he himself had not done so, and refused to let him go to Rome, declaring that he himself would bestow upon him the pall. But St. Anselm reminded William that he had vowed obedience to Urban, and had declared his resolution of keeping that vow from the first, when he had so unwillingly accepted the office of Archbishop of Canterbury. He positively refused to receive the pall from any one but the Pope, because he was the Head of the Church, and he had vowed to obey him. He expostulated with the king, and told him that he was ready to 'render unto Cæsar the things which were Cæsar's,' but that he must also 'render unto God the things which were God's.' The king still persisted; but Anselm still remained firm. Now, to judge rightly of the Archbishop's conduct, it will not do to compare it with the laws *now* existing, but with the state

of things at that time. The Pope was then the acknowledged head of all the Western Church; his authority was not questioned; all bishops and archbishops at their consecration vowed obedience to him; and, therefore, to disobey him would have been breaking an oath. Whether or not this was a right state of things is another question, and one we need not now consider. At that time nothing had occurred to divide the Western Church, of which the English was a part, and of which the Pope was the head. For a bishop to have disobeyed the laws of the Church then, and to have obeyed the king rather than the Pope (his ecclesiastical superior in things spiritual), would have been fearing man more than God. It was a law of the Church that archbishops should receive the pall from the hands of the Pope: this particular law in question is not now binding upon us, because the Western Church is in a divided state, and one set of laws does not govern the whole body. But such being the existing law, I leave you to judge whether St. Anselm was wrong or right in refusing to be invested with his dignity by the hands of the king. The dispute lasted a long time: a council of bishops was called to decide the point; but they did nothing to help St. Anselm, though they knew he was right,

because they were afraid of the king. At last, after contesting the point for a long while, finding that the Archbishop was ready to die sooner than compromise his principles, the king submitted; the pall was brought from Rome by the Pope's nuncio (or deputy), and laid upon the altar in the cathedral of Canterbury, from whence St. Anselm received it as from the Pope. But William never quite forgave the Archbishop; his reconciliation with him was not sincere, so he soon found other subjects of dispute. When he made war upon Wales, he declared that the money St. Anselm sent to aid him was not so much as it ought to be; and this gave rise to ill-will again. St. Anselm, finding that his single authority was not sufficient for so unruly an age and so rebellious a son of the Church, felt a great desire to go to Rome to consult the Pope. He asked William's permission to do so, but was harshly refused; and when he pressed the point, the king banished him from the country. St. Anselm felt no bitterness against the unhappy monarch, who was surely more to be pitied than himself; he calmly divested himself of his robes and sailed from Dover. But before he left the country, he went to bid the king farewell, and asked him if he would not first receive an apostolical blessing. The haughty

king, for a moment awed by the Christian dignity of the injured Archbishop, bowed his head, and St. Anselm solemnly blessed him, and then left his presence for ever. No sooner, however, was he out of the country, than William again sacrilegiously seized the revenues of the see of Canterbury. But that St. Anselm had no feelings of personal anger against him is evident from his conduct at Rome; for when the Pope, indignant at the king's repeated outrages, was about to excommunicate him, St. Anselm generously interceded for him and saved him from that dreadful punishment. Excommunication is the most awful punishment that can be inflicted in this life; it is a sentence which debars the offender from all religious ordinances and privileges, and cuts him off from all fellowship with other Christians. It was enjoined by St. Paul to be resorted to in extreme cases, when persons could not be corrected in any other way. You must not, then, forget that William Rufus had incurred this punishment, and that St. Anselm saved him from it at the very time that he had driven him from the country. It would take too long to tell you all the debates which took place at Rome; for my only wish is to give you a brief outline of those interesting events, so as to prepare your minds to study that part of history

for yourselves with a proper and true bias. William having thus got rid of his faithful monitor—the only person who had sufficient regard for him to tell him the truth—saw him no more; for St. Anselm remained abroad till Walter Tyrrell's arrow sent the king to answer for his conduct before the Judgment-seat of God. In 1100, when Henry I. came to the throne, St. Anselm returned to England, and was received with great honour by the king and all the people. But this feeling of good will did not last long; Henry partook of his brother's ambitious views of royal supremacy; and a disagreement of much the same kind as that of the preceding reign rose between the sovereign and the Saint. The dispute was this:—Henry wished the Archbishop to be reinvested by his hands, as a mark of his subjection to him as king; and St. Anselm refused, because there was a canon or law of the Church forbidding laymen to invest abbeys or cathedrals or any ecclesiastic, and sentencing excommunication on all laymen who presumed to invest, and all clergymen who should receive such investitures. It had become necessary to enforce the law with great strictness, because lately terrible abuses had arisen in consequence of the neglect of it. Simony and other great crimes were constantly

committed; and all who wished well to the Church were very anxious to correct these abuses and enforce the law. Perhaps you do not know the meaning of the word *simony*. It is the sin of Simon Magus, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles; it means, offering or receiving money or any other bribes in exchange for some spiritual office. The dispute between St. Anselm and Henry involved an important principle, nothing less than the freedom of the Church; and the question is, whether, so long *as such was the law*, St. Anselm, having sworn to obey *all* the laws of the Church, could rightly disregard it. To judge of historical events impartially, we must not view the actions of men by the modern notions of wrong and right, but by *the then* acknowledged laws, and *the then* existing opinions. Henry did not dispute the fact of there being such a law; on the contrary, he appealed to the Pope to dispense with it, but his request was positively refused. The debate lasted for four or five years; but then the king, finding that he could not gain his point, contented himself with the slight concession which the Pope agreed to make, namely, that the bishops and abbots should do homage to him for their temporalities. The king then sent for St. Anselm to return to England; but hearing that

he was ill, he went over himself to Normandy to settle all disputes amicably at the abbey of Bec, where the Archbishop was staying. It is thought that the king's temper was very much softened by the influence and example of his queen, the pious Matilda; indeed, there can be no doubt that the holiness of this exemplary lady gave a healthy tone to the rough court of the feudal king and his barons. Matilda, or Maude, was the daughter of that Margaret who was sister to Edgar Atheling, and who married Malcolm king of Scotland. From her infancy she had been brought up in habits of holiness; her mother was a most saintly character, and on her deathbed committed her children to the care of her confessor Turgot, bidding him not spare them but train them in virtue. This the good man faithfully did; and well did the pious Maude repay his cares. After her mother's death, she was placed for personal protection in a convent, of which her aunt was the abbess; for, as I told you, in those rough days convents were almost necessary houses of refuge for unprotected females. She wore the dress of a nun for safety, though she had not taken the vows. In that sacred asylum she became confirmed in the holy habits in which she had been trained; and when taken from thence to

be married to the king, she did not lose those habits. She lived in this world as one who was merely passing through it to a better; her chief object being always to benefit the Church of God. Matilda's favourite avocation was ministering personally to the poor, which she did in a very lowly way, sometimes washing their feet and waiting on them. She alone knew how to soften the rugged temper of the king; and his subsequent peace with St. Anselm is to be mainly attributed to her, for her respect and affection for this prelate were unbounded, as she proved when he was returning from Normandy by travelling on before him to provide for him on the road.—Well, now, my little historians, what do you think of St. Anselm?"

All the Children. "Oh, we quite love him!"

Fitzmaur. "How is it possible not to love so holy and kind a man, and so gentle too? Thank you very much for telling us all this history. But how is it that any one can examine the case, and yet find fault with him? Surely every one must think it right to obey the laws."

Mr. Russell. "It is, that people do not examine the case; they think because they, in these modern days, look upon it as unnecessary to obey the Pope, that therefore it must have been always wrong; forgetting that then to be a Chris-

tian even nominally, a man must at least profess to obey the ruler of the Church, and must be in communion with the see of Rome."

Edward. "Well, I must say, fair's fair! It is nonsense to quarrel with a man for being a papist, when there was no other way of being a Christian. One might just as well quarrel with a man for wetting his feet when there is no dry ground to stand upon. I shall snap my fingers at Uncle John, and tell him he knows nothing about it."

Mary. "Besides, if obeying the Pope made people so holy as St. Anselm and Maude, I do not see that it could be so very bad to do so."

Fitzmaur. "Still, from what I have heard, I think people must have added things afterwards to their religion which were not so good. But, at all events, you see Alice was right, to say one should be careful how one spoke of any one who is called a Saint."

Alice. "I think, at least, we should not find fault with them till we are sure that we are quite as holy. Do you think, father, there are any people in the world now as good as St. Anselm?"

Mr. Russell. "Indeed, my love, that is a question no one can answer but the Searcher of hearts; but I think you are quite right in say-

ing, that until we are equal in holiness to those whom we presume to judge, we ought to speak of them very reverently; and then, when we *have* attained their holiness, there is no danger of our censuring them."

Mary. "And now please to tell us the story of the gentle lady."[1]

Mr. Russell. "The gentle lady, as you call her, was Margaret, daughter of Robert Baron De Courcy, one of the retinue of William the Conqueror. I will read to you the brief account of her which I have collected from old manuscripts. — Robert Baron De Courcy was a rough fierce soldier, skilled in the arts of war, but little adapted to the gentle blessings of peace. He married a beautiful and virtuous lady; but he cared little for her after the two first years were flown, and he broke her heart by his violent stormy passions. She had brought him a lovely daughter, whose face was like that of a bright angel; but he wished for a son, and it angered him to have none. 'What care I,' he often said, 'for cheeks like the damask rose, and eyes like the blue of heaven, when the Ba-

[1] The history of St. Anselm is given detached from that of Margaret De Courcy, that the young reader may not confound historical facts with fiction. All that has been related hitherto of the Saint is strictly true; whereas all that follows is the work of imagination.

ronetage De Courcy will be inherited by one who must bear a stranger's name, and no son will perpetuate his father's valour or boast of his father's exploits?' Thus he murmured, and the pious persuasions of his lady only angered him the more; and for two or three years he would not caress the pretty creature, whose charms expanded before his eyes day by day. It would have saved the Baroness De Courcy many a bitter tear if she could have had a son; but such was not the will of the most High God, and to His loved will she ever willingly bowed her own. While her husband accompanied his chieftain William of Normandy to the wars or, if in peace, followed the chase, she occupied herself in household duties and in deeds of mercy, and trained her daughter in the like habits of virtue. Day by day Margaret grew in beauty, in wisdom and in piety, until at last her gentleness and loveliness won upon her father's rough heart, and he loved her. Yes, he loved her, and her playful tenderness would often soothe his ruffled temper and turn a frown into a smile. Nevertheless, he was sometimes fearfully harsh, and many a cruel word and even blow the child endured in patience. One day, when the little maiden was about ten years old, tradition says that she was playing with some young com-

panions close by the gates of the abbey of Bec. Her father's castle was in that neighbourhood. The baron was returning from an unsuccessful chase, not in the best of humours, when some of the children by accident crossed his path. He told them roughly to move; but as they did not do so as quickly as he wished, he dismounted in a great passion, and drove them away with menaces and blows. He did not at first perceive that his own child was among them; but when he saw her, he seized her roughly by the shoulder, and asked her how she dared disobey him. The trembling child meekly answered, that she had not, to her knowledge, disobeyed him. Upon this the baron swore, with a tremendous oath, that not a vassal in his vast domains presumed to contradict him, and that assuredly his own daughter should not. The child, who had trembled for herself under her father's wrath, now trembled for him, and clasping her fair hands and dropping on her knee, she exclaimed, 'Hush, my father; I pray you, say not that wicked word; do you not feel that the great God is shining round us?' The baron was about to reply, but he was arrested by a deep stern voice, exclaiming, 'Who art thou, who fearest not the wrath of God, and art not awed by the majesty of innocence?' The

proud Norman looked up and saw before him a mild but severe-looking monk, fixing his eyes upon him as though he would read his very soul. De Courcy, unable to meet the calm gaze of the man of God, shrunk away ashamed. The monk then raised the weeping child in his arms, and tenderly embracing her, soothed her and commanded her to tell him who she was, and what caused her tears. It needed not much to win the confidence of the innocent one; she spoke of her mother and of her home, and in a short time had poured all her little griefs and joys into the sympathising ear of the great St. Anselm.

"Such was the first introduction of Margaret De Courcy to Anselm; and from that time for about six years her intercourse with him was almost uninterrupted. Day after day, when she had obediently followed the instructions of her mother in working tapestry and other accomplishments of the age, she repaired to the abbey, where her mind gradually expanded under the more intellectual tuition of the holy man. She learned to look to him for consolation and direction under every circumstance; he became her confessor, her father and her guide. Who need wonder that, with such culture, virtues already in the bud opened into

flowers worthy of a heavenly garden? Who need wonder that to her well-disciplined mind the roughnesses of life became smooth; and that even the baron was in a measure softened by the powerful influence of domestic holiness?

"Nevertheless, when Margaret looked at her gentle mother and called to mind the sorrow she had so often witnessed, and when the loud and boisterous joviality of the baron's feudal court jarred upon her ears, she often breathed a prayerful hope that her lot in life might be different; that instead of the pomp and cheerless grandeur in which she had been reared, hers might be a quiet cell, enlivened by repeated hours of prayer, and her time spent in labours of love and devotion, better fitted for one whose thoughts were in heaven than the task of gracing a baronial board. This was Margaret's wish. She was acquainted with some of the sisters of a neighbouring convent, and her heart yearned to follow their holy avocations. To St. Anselm she disclosed her wishes; but though he commended her choice, he did not much encourage her in it; he reminded her that, as her father's heiress, he had probably destined her to a far different course; and he impressed upon her mind this solemn truth, that the state of life to which God has called us is

the state in which we can best glorify Him, and that obedience is better than sacrifice.

"It was in the year 1066, when William of Normandy had summoned his barons (of whom De Courcy was always foremost) to accompany him in his projected invasion of England, that the quiet tenour of Margaret's life was first broken. She had prayed her father to permit her, at least for a time during his absence and for protection, to enter a convent; but he had answered, with a loud laugh, that he had a much more suitable protector in store for her. Traces of tears were on Margaret's face as she entered the chapel where she was to meet her revered director; and when, as she was wont, she bent the knee and asked him for his blessing, the grief she had till then restrained burst forth in fresh tears. 'What grieves thee, my daughter?' the good priest inquired. 'Father, my hopes are blighted; the baron, my father, has commanded me to prepare myself; for it is his will and pleasure that I should be given in marriage, and his pleasure, I well know, none can resist. Alas, I had hoped' . . . . . 'My child,' replied St. Anselm, taking her by the hand, 'go forward in the path of obedience, and thou shalt inherit a crown. If it were God's will

that thou shouldst embrace a convent-life, He would so ordain it; if, even yet, it should be His will, He will bring it about; but oppose not His will.' 'Father, I obey,' replied the weeping maiden; 'but my heart is filled with dread.' 'What fearest thou in the path of duty?' asked the Saint. 'I have seen my future lord,' she answered; 'it is young Bertram, son of Count Maure, commonly called Bertram Fitzmaure; I have seen him and I like him not. He is a man fond of war and fierce like my father. I greatly fear him; I tremble lest my life pass in tears, like that of my mother.' 'Tell me, daughter,' said the man of God, 'when thou didst desire to lead the life of a recluse, was it to embrace or to avoid the Cross of Christ?' 'To embrace it, father,' replied the maiden. 'Then embrace the one He offers thee,' replied the Saint. 'But what shall I do, if hard words and cruel treatment be my fate for many long dreary years?' Margaret asked. St. Anselm answered by drawing her opposite the Altar of God and pointing to the image of the Crucified; then, when her feelings were excited by the agony of her Lord, he solemnly said, 'Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.' Go thou, and

do likewise.' 'I will, father, I will,' Margaret said; but presently added, clasping her hands, 'yet what if, when I am his wife, I love him not?' 'My daughter,' exclaimed the saint, 'trouble not thyself with the future. Give the whole of thy affection to Christ; and then from that pure treasure He will bestow as much as seemeth unto Him meet upon him whom it is His will thou shouldst honour.' Margaret appeared soothed; but before she quitted that sacred spot, she turned again to St. Anselm, and said, 'But what if I be constrained to leave thee, my father, and perhaps see thee no more? How could I prosper without thy guidance?' 'Thou shalt be guided by God,' replied the holy Anselm. 'Hast thou forgotten the faith of thy childhood? Hast thou ceased to feel *that the good God is shining round thee?*'

"Important events had occurred within two years from this time; William of Normandy had established himself on the English throne, and divided the estates of the native Saxons among his own followers. They, fortifying themselves in strong castles, were beginning to reign like petty princes; and most of the chief barons found it worth while to forsake their Norman residences, and naturalise themselves on English

soil. Amongst the number were De Courcy and Bertram.

"Time passed on, and Margaret once more stood before St. Anselm; but not alone, as formerly, did she stand;—in her arms she clasped a lovely boy. 'Father, I am come to ask thy blessing on myself and my infant, before I follow my husband into a strange land,' were the words she spoke. St. Anselm laid his hand in blessing on the mother and the babe; the former still radiant in beauty, the graceful fragile girl having developed into the portly dignified matron. Her bright beaming eye, and the unfaded red of her cheek, sufficiently answered the inquiring glance with which the kind preceptor scanned her countenance, to ascertain if his young favourite's fears had been realised. 'Daughter, thou art happy, methinks,' he said. 'Yes, father, I am happy; thanks to God, who has loaded me with undeserved blessings. I love my Bertram and my little one, and Bertram loves me; I wronged him; my fears were ill founded. He is a lion in the field, but a lamb at home. And now I willingly follow him wherever he goes; but yet it grieves me to leave thee, my father; perchance I may never see thee more.' 'Fear not, my daughter,' said the holy man; 'there is no such thing as absence in Christ's Church; we may be always

together in spirit, though not in the flesh. Besides, thou canst not tell what decrees of Providence may ordain our meeting, even though England be thy destination. God bless thee, my child; go in peace!'

"The barons of William the Conqueror soon became masters of the soil, and the poor Saxons were but their serfs, and oftentimes were cruelly treated. But not so in the princely dominions of Bertram, commonly called Fitzmaur. He, as the feudal chief, was to his vassals a father and a friend; and they, from their hearts, felt ready to perform those services which their vassalage required. That state of reciprocal kindness and mutual dependence, which the feudal system was designed to create, was beautifully exhibited by Bertram and his vassals, while the gentle Margaret ministered to the poor on her husband's estate, nourishing them and waiting on them with her own hands. Thus in deeds of love Margaret's days flowed on for many happy years; but not for ever.

"It was seven years from the time of the parting above related, when Margaret again stood in the chapel belonging to the abbey of Bec. The death of her father had made her Baroness De Courcy; and the lordly domains

of the baron had been united to those of her husband. Margaret knelt within the walls she had so tenderly loved in her childhood; but very unlike the bright creature of those days was the being on whom the red rays of an October setting sun now fell through the stained window. It was vesper-time, and the solemn chants perhaps accorded well with her feelings; for she remained motionless, her eyes fixed on one object, seemingly so absorbed in thought as not to perceive the restlessness of the noble-looking boy she held by the hand. When the last note had died away into silence, and the footsteps of the departing worshippers had ceased to echo from the paved aisle, Margaret approached one of the priests, who was just retiring into the sacristy, and requested to speak to Anselm, the prior. He appeared. The unvaried and peaceful tenour of his life had made the lapse of years imperceptible in him; and the sight of his reverend figure brought back to Margaret's mind her happy childhood. But when she advanced towards him, dressed in the weeds of widowhood, her bright eye dimmed with weeping, and her comely figure attenuated by sorrow, he knew her not; and it was not till she had knelt before him, and he had heard the silvery tones of her

voice, that he recognised her, and exclaimed, 'Margaret, my beloved daughter!'

"'Father,' said the young widow, 'Bertram is dead: the will of God be done! It has pleased the Lord to recall to Himself that portion of my affection which He permitted me to bestow upon Bertram for ten happy years. And now I would gladly raise a monument to his memory, and a memorial of my thankfulness to God; for Bertram departed this life in His faith and fear.' 'God prosper thee in thy work!' replied Anselm; 'what monument wouldst thou raise?' 'I wish to found a church; that there, though absent in the body, we may be present in the spirit, and that there succeeding generations may bless and praise God's name.' 'God's blessing be on thee and on thy work!' replied the man of God.

"For some length of time the conference between the Saint and the widow lasted; many words of comfort were poured into her heart; and at the close of it she said to him, 'Is not the moment come now when the wish of my girlhood may be accomplished?—is it not time that I should retire and pray, and spend my widowed life in the service of God's poor?—tell me, my father, may I not now take shelter in a convent, and hide myself from an unsympathis-

ing world?' 'No, my daughter,' replied St. Anselm; 'that hour is not yet. Thou must serve Christ where He has placed thee; for thou hast yet much work to perform. Thou must train that boy in the paths of holiness, and in allegiance to God and the king; thou must rule his vassals till he is of an age to rule them himself; his dominions are vast, and require a skilful hand and head. Thy toils are not ended; repose must not be yet; go in peace.'

"Margaret obeyed; and for ten years more she laboured incessantly, uncheered by the affectionate companion who had solaced her hitherto. In solitude she performed every duty, and earnestly strove to curb the headstrong passions of her son, who, as he grew older, betrayed an inclination to stubbornness and pride. As the young Bertram grew year by year, uniting the beauty of one parent to the valour of the other, he cost his affectionate mother many bitter tears; for he did not display in the same proportion the virtues of either. Still Margaret hoped and prayed, and doubted not that God would hear her intercessions in behalf of her wayward son. She strove to avert the mischief of his recklessness. Now she pleaded for the vassal whom his thoughtless tyranny would fain oppress, and now her awe-inspiring virtue checked

the riotous mirth in which he and his associates would otherwise have indulged. So that as long as he walked in her presence he was restrained.

"But in an evil hour he left her side, professedly to visit his Norman territories, praying his mother to rule in his stead during his absence. Then was Margaret's cup of bitterness full to the brim, when she heard that the son of her bosom had joined the standard of the young Duke Robert of Normandy, who was in arms against his own father. On the wings of maternal love she sped to Normandy, and pursued her rebel son into the very camp; and she raised her awful hand, and she conjured him by the anguish she had borne for him, by a mother's love, by his hopes of heaven, to lay down his arms and return to the allegiance of his king. Bertram trembled before his mother; yes, the brave warrior trembled before the weak woman, as sin must ever tremble in the presence of virtue; but his comrades jeered him, and the risings of remorse were stifled. 'Hear me, my son,' said the Lady Margaret; 'the sin of rebellion is ever as the sin of witchcraft; it is a heinous transgression,—by it the angels fell from heaven; and to raise the hand against the Lord's anointed makes man to become as one of them. But how much deeper is the dye of this most black

offence, when is added to it, disobedience to a father, as in the case of the young Duke Robert. And in thy case also, my son; for be assured my blessing shall never rest upon a rebel to his prince.' Long pleaded Margaret, but in vain; Bertram now wavered, and then again sunk into obstinacy; he had formed bad friends, and they had spurred him on to vice. Finally, when his mother asked him if he would choose her blessing or her curse, he turned away. 'Farewell, my son,' she then exclaimed; 'beware lest thou never see thy mother's face again.'

"Weary and faint, and broken in heart, the sorrowing Margaret once more repaired for consolation to the prior of the abbey of Bec. But when she saw her revered and long-tried friend again, she fell at his feet in an agony of tears, exclaiming, 'Once widowed, and now worse than childless, behold, my father, thy unhappy daughter.' St. Anselm, now a grey-headed old man, raised her by the hand, listened to her tale of sorrow, and breathed hope into her heart. 'I bid thee,' he said, 'remember the story recorded of St. Monica, the holy mother of St. Augustine; take comfort by her example. Imitate her patience, her faith, and her perseverance in prayer, and doubt not that thy reward shall be like hers. After many years her prayers

were heard, and the son who so long had wandered in the paths of sin and heresy, returned to those of virtue and true faith. And thou too, my afflicted daughter, shalt reap the fruits of thy labours, if not in the flesh, yet more certainly in the spirit, when thou shalt watch over thy then penitent child.' 'God's will be done,' replied the lady; 'but what remains for me now, my father? in what does my duty lie? for I can no longer rule the domains of my son, whose vassals will, of course, follow their liege lord to rebellion against the king.' 'The time is now come,' said Anselm, 'that the wish of thy youth may be accomplished; nought remains for thee now but intercession and prayer; retire in faith and hope, and God's blessing be upon thee! The heart thou didst so loyally offer to thy God in all its freshness, twenty years ago, He will still accept, now broken in His service.'

"A very short time after this, Margaret had taken the veil in the convent of Rumsey, in Hampshire. In prayer, in fasting, and in almsdeeds, her days flowed on for twenty years. History records that within the sanctuary of this convent was placed for protection, not as a professed nun, the young Matilda of Scotland, daughter of the pious Margaret Atheling. After the death of her saintly parents, her faithful

guardian and confessor, Turgot, who had fulfilled his promise of carefully training the royal girl, placed her under the care of Christina, her aunt, abbess of the convent of Rumsey. Margaret loved the young Saxon, and Matilda returned her love; and the widow felt as if she had found another child, and the orphan another mother. Nevertheless the princess felt no inclination to follow Margaret's profession, and this she, from the first, honestly declared. She sought but protection within the convent-walls, and eagerly longed to discard the sober habit which, for still further security, she was compelled to wear. Nay, often when the severe eye of the abbess was not upon her, she would throw off the veil from her royal brow, and let loose her luxuriant tresses, exclaiming that the habit suited her not. This distaste for a convent-life, which Matilda had from her childhood betrayed, proceeded not from lack of piety, far from it; not even in those days, when monastic rules were regarded with so excessive a partiality, could such an accusation have been made against the royal Saxon. God endows His creatures with different tastes and dispositions, which are so many several talents, and according to these He exacts services, but He seeks not to reap where He hath not sown. This the gentle

indulgent Margaret well knew; and she never urged her young companion to profess a strictness which she could not consistently have carried out; but rather she endeavoured, by her example and precepts, to form her to habits of piety which would fit her for any state of life to which it might please God to call her. They accompanied each other in the task of ministering to Christ through His poor, and this was equally a solace and delight to both. And who can estimate the benefit of an early life so spent? When subsequently Matilda exchanged the veil for a crown, becoming queen to Henry I. of England, who can say how much of the wisdom with which she ruled, the sweetness with which she curbed her husband's passions, and the humility and piety which added fresh power to the sceptre and fresh charms to her beauty, may not have been owing to the habits of religion formed within the walls of Rumsey? As a queen, the splendours of royalty never caused Matilda to forget that duty which alone sanctifies riches, almsdeeds. So many and so humble were her acts of charity, that she was once rebuked by a courtier for them, to whom, according to a quaint poet of the day, she thus replied: 'Why say you so? Our Lord Himself example

gave for so to do.' Her saintly character is concisely described in a Latin epigram, the sense of which may be thus rendered: 'She was never elated by joy, nor dejected by sorrow; she smiled at adversity, and trembled at prosperity; beauty never occasioned frailty, nor the sceptre pride; her power was exercised in humility, and her charms were enhanced by modesty.'

"In the calm retreat she had selected, Margaret passed year after year unmoved by the sundry chances and changes of this mortal life. The waters which deluged the world only caused the ark of her repose to rise higher and higher towards heaven. She did not, indeed, cease to feel a mother's anguish for her erring son, of whom she heard sad reports; but she daily and hourly prayed for him, and rested in a tranquil faith that her prayers would be answered at last. During the years she spent thus, the death of the first William brought his riotous, reckless son to the throne, who, tortured by remorse for his daring sacrilege, promoted the holy Anselm to the see of Canterbury, and thereby unknowingly caused a lively joy to the Baroness De Courcy. Shortlived was that joy, however,—as shortlived as the penitence of the king; his disputes with St. Anselm soon commenced, and

were followed by the banishment of the latter, leaving nothing for Margaret but to pray for her absent friend, and for pardon for the king.

"But more intense was Margaret's grief, and more fervent were her prayers, when she learned, that, among the lawless courtiers of William Rufus, whose flattery and pernicious counsels had urged him on in the path of vice, was her own hapless son, Bertram. This wretched young man had gone on from bad to worse. He had left the service of Duke Robert, when the latter engaged in the Crusades, and joined the court of William; while there, his conduct was so notoriously bad, that he was several times rebuked by the Archbishop. But these rebukes only seemed to harden his heart, and to raise therein bitter resentment against the stern monitor, whose counsels would, if heeded, have saved him from much misery. At last his impenitence brought upon him sentence of excommunication; and from that hour he plotted evil against St. Anselm. In the mean while he went recklessly on, disregarding the awful punishment that had been laid upon him. He had married a young Saxon lady of great beauty; and she in dissipation, and he in riotous pleasures, passed their days.

"How unspeakable is the long-suffering of

God, in bearing with such rebels! How great the value of a mother's prayers in behalf of her child! How often when the avenging Hand was raised against the sinner, may the supplicatory cry, 'Spare him, good Lord,' have caused it to be averted! The spark of spiritual life was not quite extinguished in Bertram's breast, it glimmered now and then; and many times amid the noisiest scenes of pleasure its feeble yet steady light sent a pang to his inmost soul, for the worm of remorse was there; and often during a sleepless night would the image of his mother rise before him, sometimes wearing the smile of tenderness which had beamed upon his childhood, and sometimes the stern frown with which she had bade him farewell in Duke Robert's camp. In spite of his hardness of heart, he still loved his mother. There was one small room in his castle into which he never could bear to enter; it was one in which during his childhood Margaret had instructed him, and which during latter years she had made her retreat from his noisy, riotous hall. Bertram could not enter this once-hallowed spot without a crowd of agonising thoughts rising to his mind, which made him shudder. He could not fix his eyes upon the lowly stool, on which, in his happy days of innocence, he had sat at his mo-

ther's feet. Therefore he had barred the door, and refused ever to set foot in it again. But with that strange mixture of reverence which sometimes lingers in the most hardened heart, like one remaining spark of that fire once kindled by the grace of God, but which now shines only to make the surrounding darkness more visible, Bertram took care to leave every article of furniture precisely as Margaret had left it when last she had tenanted the spot, even to the hassock on which her knees had bent in prayer,—in prayer, perhaps, for him.

"On the accession of Henry I., Bertram had left the court—for the scholar-king suited him not—and had lived principally within his own domains, spending most of his time in the chase. It was, perhaps, the retirement of the castle that brought Bertram's lady to reflection; certain it is, that some time after her sojourn there, she became very sad, and the thoughts of the reckless life her husband was leading, in which she had rather encouraged him than the reverse, preyed upon her mind, and his long neglect of the heavy sentence which debarred him from all ordinances of religion terrified her. Bertram was so little at home, and when there was so surrounded by pleasure-seeking companions like himself, that he noticed not the change

which for some months might have been perceptible in her. He noticed not that, each morning, before he had recovered from the night's revels, she had repaired to attend the service in the church; he knew not that she had again had recourse to the long-neglected ordinances of religion:—this change had been working for many months before he perceived it.

"At length, an accidental circumstance brought it before him. He happened to pass near the door of the room he kept so sacredly closed, and to his surprise he thought he heard sounds within. He paused an instant, hesitating between the shrinking he felt from opening that door, and his desire to ascertain who had opened it before him. The latter prevailed; he cautiously entered the room, and there, to his astonishment, beheld his lady on her knees, and bathed in tears. She rose when he appeared, and for some minutes they gazed at each other in silence. At length she approached him, and laid her head upon his shoulder. 'Bertram,' said the lady, 'alas, how unworthy a successor am I of her who formerly inhabited these walls!' The stout baron trembled like a withered leaf at this allusion to his mother; and gathering his brows into a fearful frown, he muttered, 'What brings thee here?' 'I came,' she said, 'to

pray for the Lady Margaret's unhappy son, and for her far more sinful daughter.' The baron trembled yet more violently, which she perceiving, said with greater urgency, 'O my Bertram! for six years thy unhappy soul has remained debarred from God's blessed ordinances; in pity, and for thy mother's sake, save thyself.' The demon of pride arose in Bertram's soul, and he would have replied fiercely, but the Angel of Grace battled with him, and he was speechless. Fierce was the struggle between them, and Bertram's breast heaved, and the veins of his brow swelled with the conflict; but the good Angel triumphed, and the hardened sinner wept. He wept long, and loud—oh, he wept such tears as if a sea of ice had thawed within him, and was weeping itself away. When his choking voice could utter a sound, his first word was 'My mother.' There was one weeping with him and for him, and at last he exclaimed again, 'My mother—ah, is she yet alive? Will she see her lost son?' 'Not as thou art now, a poor withering branch, a severed limb; but hie thee to the feet of Anselm, and he will give thee pardon, and send thee to thy mother.' Thus spoke his lady; and he replied, 'Thank thee for thy timely counsel; I will do thy bidding.'

"At the feet of the holy Anselm knelt Ber-

tram; and the good Archbishop, who had mourned for him as for a hopeless child, now wept tears of joy over him. He placed a letter in his hand, and said, 'Hasten to the convent of Rumsey, and give this to Christina the abbess, and at my bidding she will grant thee an interview with thy mother. Tell Margaret I sent thee, and she will bless thee; and then bring me tidings of her, for some time has passed away since I have seen her. Remember me to thy lady mother, and tell her that Anselm blesses her.' Though Bertram had sped with his utmost speed the journey which brought him to the convent, yet once within sight of its walls, he felt as if he could not proceed. He dismounted, and left his steed at a distance; but as he advanced his knees trembled under him; he paused every now and then, as if to summon strength; twenty years had flown since he had seen that tender parent, and now he dreaded what he longed for. With a hesitating hand he knocked at the convent-gate, and asked for the abbess; he was told she was in the chapel, but that the service would soon be ended. Thither he repaired; not indeed venturing his unsanctified foot within the holy threshold; but standing without, waiting the conclusion of the office. He listened to the voices within, chanting a

solemn requiem for the dead; and the beautiful strains of devotion, the first he had heard for so many years, as they fell upon his ear, caused within his heart a mingled sensation of agony and hope. The music ceased, and he heard the footsteps of the procession about to leave the church. He hastily retreated within a recess, and watched in silence, and he saw the long file of sisters bearing one of their community to a new-made grave; and then he saw the earth thrown in, the black cross erected at the head, and the procession return to the convent, leaving the departed one to the repose of death. Then he advanced, and timidly approaching the abbess, he threw himself on his knees before her. 'Who art thou?' she inquired, surprised at the fierce-looking being thus humbled before her. 'A miserable sinner,' was his reply. 'God help thee, my son; but what wouldst thou of me?' resumed the abbess. Bertram placed the letter in her hands, and hid his face. 'Ho, from Anselm!' exclaimed she, viewing the signature; 'how fares his Grace of Canterbury?' Then, when she had perused the document—'What, art thou Bertram, the son of Margaret De Courcy?' 'The same,' replied the baron; 'the wicked son of the holiest of mothers.' 'Thou sayest well, the holiest of mothers,' re-

turned the abbess; and then she paused, and muttered half audibly—'Strange are the dealings of the Most High. My son,' she continued, 'if thou wilt only repent, and be restored to the communion of the Church, thou wilt never more be separated from thy mother. Stone walls could bar her from thee in the flesh; but the Communion of the Saints nothing can impede, for they are spiritual. God help thee, poor sinner, thou art too late, thy mother lies within that new-made grave; but her glorified spirit blesses thee. Nay, look not so fiercely wild, I pray thee; but listen to my words: she prayed for thee to the very last; yes, her feeble voice was heard to utter thy name after it had ceased to articulate any other sound. And God was gracious to her, and comforted her concerning thee; for, a few hours before her blessed soul took flight, she raised her eyes with a smile which seemed of heaven, and said, 'He has heard me; my son is saved!' Therefore I tell thee'..... But Bertram heard no more; for with a shriek which might have awakened from their cold sleep the tenants of that consecrated spot, he fell into a heavy swoon. There was such agony in that shriek that it pierced the hearts of all; and many charitable Christians gathered around to aid the wretched man. But

Bertram was not yet schooled to bend to the sympathy of fellow-men, and so, directly his senses returned, he rushed from them to pour out his bitterness in solitude.

"That night, when the sun went down, upon that new-made grave a penitent lay stretched, and the next morning, when it rose again, the penitent still was there.

"From that day, the man who had spent so many hours in noisy mirth was never known to smile again. When he returned to his domains, he shrank from entering his castle; but fled to a cave, where he hid himself for three days, and probably would have died there, but that he was found by a peasant, and carried home. To this day, that cave is called by the peasantry, the *Penitent's Cave*. His was, at that time, undisciplined grief; but he was not forsaken in his distress—though Anselm did not long survive his child and pupil, there wanted not faithful friends who brought him to a better state. His mother's royal companion, the good queen Maude, when she heard of his story, shewed sisterly kindness to Bertram's lady, and earnestly commended them both to the care of her own confessor. Soothed by the affectionate counsels of one who had known and loved his mother, Bertram accepted the proffered kindness;

and, restored to the communion of the Church, felt also restored to his mother, and spent the rest of his days in works of penitence and piety."

During the latter part of Mr. Russell's narrative, Fitzmaur had sat with his face hidden in his hands; and when it was concluded, he faltered out, "Oh, how sad, how very, very sad to think of Bertram not seeing his mother again! I wonder he did not die of grief. It makes me shudder to think of the life of misery he must have led after her death; he never could have been happy again."

Alice. "No, I should think not; but they are together now. And consider the many hundred years that Bertram has, as we hope, been happy. It is nearly eight hundred years. How very short he must now think those years of misery!"

Fitzmaur. "Yes, I forgot that. It is not worth while to think of the few years of sorrow,—those of happiness are so much greater. I suppose that is what is meant, when we are told that we should not care so much for what we may have to endure in this life, if we thought more of heaven."

Mr. Russell. "Exactly so; a habit of realising the happiness of the Saints makes us value

present things according to their actual worth; and makes us feel that a few years of contrition and self-denial are a trifling sacrifice."

Mary. "It seems so strange to think that we are all descended from Margaret. How good we ought to be!"

Edward. "How I should like to be a brave chief, with a great number of followers, like Bertram's father! I should not like to be himself, because he did so many wicked things; and to lose my dear mamma would break my heart. But I should like to be the first Bertram. I wish there were brave knights in these days."

Fitzmaur. "I had rather though be him when he was at the head of his vassals at home, making them happy and doing them good; I always think it must be so pleasant to have a great number of dependents to make happy. Then, if I was about the court, or a statesman, I think I should try to persuade the king to be very kind to all the bishops, and to do good to the Church;—that is, I feel as if I should."

Mr. Russell. "God grant you may, my boy, if ever you have the opportunity!"

Mary. "I should like to be Margaret, when she managed all the estate herself, and did so much good; or Matilda, the queen,—it must

be very, very pleasant to be a queen; I mean, of course, a good queen."

Alice. "I had rather be Margaret when she had retired from all the noise in the world, and was spending her time in praying for others and in helping the poor. I quite pity Matilda for having to leave that calm quiet spot, to mix again in all the troubles and turmoils of the world."

Mary. "Oh, no; because she was glad to go. And then, you know, she was quite as good after she was queen."

Alice. "Yes, quite as good; but I should think not so happy. However, Mary, if you mean to be Queen Matilda, I will be Margaret, staying quietly in some little cell to pray for you. Do you think, father, that people can lead lives like Margaret now?"

Mr. Russell. "Yes, if they give themselves up to the service of God, they may lead a life of prayer and faith, not only in a convent, but wherever God may cast their lot in life. And in the world, too, all may glorify God, by serving Him in lowliness and obedience, and taking care to do all their works secretly, not to be seen and praised by men."

Mary. "I cannot help fancying that Margaret must have been more useful when living in her castle, than in the convent."

Alice. " I am not sure of that; for consider that what she could not succeed in doing for her son by her exertions, she accomplished for him by her prayers."

Mr. Russell. " Yes; we are all rather apt to forget, in these days, the actual benefit of prayer. And now, my children, I must leave you: I hope you will not forget the story of ' the gentle lady;' and that in whatever position you may be placed, you will do your duty like her."

The three visitors thanked Mr. Russell; and extorted a promise from Alice, that she would accompany them the next day to see the Penitent's Cave. Alice had often seen it; but she said she should look at it now with double interest. All the children had at different times passed the spot; but now they wanted to explore the cave, and look into every cranny, and particularly notice a little dent in the stone, which common tradition said had been worn by the penitent's knees.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FERRY.

It wanted but two days to Fitzmaur's birthday, and Alice had been dreaming of it all night, confounding him with Bertram, son of the lady Margaret, and mixing up confused visions of castles, convents and archbishops. With a light heart she arose on a bright sunny morning, and performed her various duties with alertness, preparing to accompany her friends on their long walk. Permission had been given to the young party to lay aside their studies rather earlier than usual, so that Alice found them ready to start when she arrived at the Castle. The only delay seemed to be caused by a slight discussion between the two boys and their mother. Miss Dalton, Mary's governess, was ill; and Lady De Courcy, with that instinctive fear of something —some distant possibility which *might* happen, which belongs to a mother's character, half doubted whether she liked the little girls to take so long a walk with the boys for their sole

protectors; and Fitzmaur and Edward, indignant at the notion that they were not competent to take care of themselves and their fair companions, were answering her arguments with the exclamation, "Why, mamma, what difficulty *can* there be? what *can* you be afraid of? Nothing *could possibly* happen to us between this and the cave which we are going to see." Still Lady De Courcy, not being quite satisfied by their energetic persuasions, compromised the matter, by saying that they should go part of the way alone; but that she would send a servant by another road, to meet them at the mountain, and accompany them home. The children contented themselves with this concession; and with an affectionate kiss received the last injunction of the fond mother: "Get you gone, you madcaps; and mind you do not get into mischief."

No second bidding was required; away bounded the happy children, every now and then turning round to kiss hands or nod to the beloved parent, whose eyes still fondly followed them, till a bend in the road hid them from her sight. It may be necessary to state, that Augusta did not accompany her cousins in their walk; they had invited her to do so; but she had replied, that she did not much care for see-

ing the cave, as she had not heard the story; and that she had a dread of that particular mountain, because there she had fallen from her horse. Though rather at a loss to understand how the above-named accident could affect a pedestrian excursion, it may be readily believed, that if Augusta was satisfied to remain at home, her companions were not disposed to quarrel with the cause.

It was a bright day, but very windy, and the wind seemed to increase as they went on; but this was pronounced to be all the better fun. It was an endless source of merriment when Edward's hat was blown off, and the whole party had to chase it; and when Mary's bonnet was turned inside out; but when little Alice, whose fairy weight offered but a slight resistance to the elements, was blown off her feet on to a bed of moss, then the peals of laughter that burst from all (herself included) might have been heard far and wide.

Their path winded up a steep hill, and then led them by the side of the river; the mountain they had to climb to reach the Penitent's Cave was still at a little distance.

"What sound was that?" suddenly exclaimed Fitzmaur; "I am sure I heard some one crying."

The children stopped to listen. For a few minutes there was nothing audible; and then they heard some one give a deep sigh, and exclaim, "Oh dear, oh dear! what shall I do?"

"What can it be?" said Alice; "some one must be in distress; we had better see what is the matter."

The sound seemed to come from the ferry; the children pushed through the shrubs to the spot, and there they saw a poor girl seated on a stump of a tree, crying; with a basket, covered with a clean cloth, laid on the ground by her side.

"I know this girl," said Alice; "it is Ellen Barton." She went up to her, and asked her kindly what was the matter.

"Poor Johnny will be waiting for me," Ellen answered; "and he'll think me so unkind not to come. The doctor was with him this morning, and prescribed something for his cough, which he said would be sure to do him good. His cough has been so painful all day, that mother said he had better have it at once; and so she sent me to get the stuff from the doctor's house, and one or two other things she wants very badly from the village. The ferryman was here half an hour ago, and rowed me over; but now he is gone, and I do not know when he will

come back: I am sure I have been waiting here a quarter of an hour; and I don't know what to do. Poor dear Johnny!"

"How very sorry I am!" said Mary; "what shall we do for you?"

"If I knew which way he was gone," said Edward, "I would run after him."

"Do you not think you and I could row her over?" said Fitzmaur to his brother.

"O yes," replied the other; "you know we have just been learning to row—we could do it easily."

"Are you sure," inquired Alice, "that your papa and mamma would trust you to row?"

"Yes, certainly," returned Fitzmaur; "papa said we ought to know how to do such things, and he has just got a little boat on purpose to teach us; and this last week we have been rowing on the lake incessantly, as you would have known if you had come to see us as usual."

"Still," said Alice, "I do not feel quite satisfied that they would approve of this; it is not exactly the same thing as rowing on the lake: besides, were you not once desired not to go on the river without leave?"

"That was two years ago," Fitzmaur answered; "and then we had never handled an oar; since that, we have practised rowing and

are become expert; and papa said he hoped we should make ourselves of use some day. Surely, if he had intended us to obey his order about the river, given two years ago, he would have told us again when he allowed us to have the boat upon the lake."

"Perhaps he forgot to do so," replied Alice.

"I really think you are too fussy," said Edward; "even if we were to get into a little scrape, it would not signify so much; besides, people are not supposed to remember what they are told so long ago."

"Oh, that is a very bad argument!" exclaimed Fitzmaur, "since we *do* happen to remember it. But what I think is, that when it is to do a good-natured thing, one may transgress a rule; because it is so right to be kind and to do good, that it is almost more important than implicit obedience."

"I daresay you know best," said Alice, hesitating; "but I always thought that a rule was a rule, and that nothing could excuse disobedience, not even the intention of doing good."

"There I am sure you are wrong," Fitzmaur replied; "for I heard Uncle John only yesterday saying something just the reverse of that, and much more like my opinion. He was talking on quite a different matter from this;

but it does not signify what the subject is—the principle is the same."

"And what did he say?" inquired Alice and Mary at once.

"He was talking with that clergyman who has been staying with us the last two days. I cannot quite recollect the actual subject of their conversation; but I think it was about some laws which they called canons, and some rules in the Prayer-book."

"But what has that to do with rowing on the river?" said Alice, laughing.

"Nothing," was Fitzmaur's rejoinder; "only Uncle John's remark struck me very much at the time. He said there could be no use in obeying rules made so long ago, under different circumstances from the present; that change of circumstances made all the difference; and that at any rate, when people felt they could do more good by going a little bit away from a rule, it was very narrow-minded to stick to it. Now, that exactly applies to our case: the rule was given a long time ago, and circumstances have quite changed since; for then we did not know how to row, and now we do, and we are also older. And certainly more good is to be done by going, because we can do a service to poor Ellen Barton and her sick brother."

"Well, then," said Alice, almost ashamed of having persisted so long in her own opinion, "of course your uncle must know best, so we will do as you wish."

They therefore turned to Ellen, and proposed to row her over. The poor girl looked up wistfully, too anxious for her brother to decline the offer, yet hardly daring to accept it.

"You are very kind," she said; "but I do not like to trouble your lordship."

"Oh, it is no trouble," said the boy; "we shall like the fun."

"Papa will be pleased to hear of your turning your rowing to a good account," said Mary.

Fitzmaur had said what was strictly true; Lord De Courcy had, indeed, had a boat made on purpose to teach his boys to row, and they had already made great progress. The application of their uncle's principle, so exactly coinciding with their own wishes, easily satisfied their consciences. The actual difficulties they thought nothing of; they little considered the difference between rowing a light boat, expressly adapted to their strength, on a smooth lake, with some experienced friend to seize the oar should a moment's difficulty occur,—and steering the unwieldy ferry on a river so violent

and rapid that there was but one spot where it could possibly be crossed, and even there it was sometimes considered unsafe without securing the boat with ropes to a stake on the bank. Little did they weigh all these differences; neither took they into account the roughness of the wind. What children are such accurate reasoners, or so prudent when an exploit is in question? They felt proud of their newly acquired talent, and eager to make it of use.

Mary and Alice declared that, since it was not wrong, they should like the row amazingly; so they, with Ellen Barton, placed themselves in the middle; and the two boys, taking each an oar, unmoored the boat, and pushed into the river.

They were rather surprised at the difficulty they experienced in rowing, and at the slow progress they made. Still they pushed steadily on, fearing no danger; and in due time they reached the opposite side in safety. Then when Ellen Barton had jumped on shore, curtsied and thanked them, and bounded off, eager to make up for lost time, Fitzmaur and Edward looked at each other quite pleased and proud.

"We have been a quarter of an hour doing it, though," Edward remarked; "and the ferryman is generally not five minutes."

"But we will run fast when we get back to the other side," answered Mary, "and soon redeem the time. It is not to be wondered at that you should have been rather slow; for the oars are too heavy for you, and the wind is so dreadfully high."

"Yes, and the river seems more swollen than usual," said Alice.

When the boys had rested their arms, they all re-entered the boat; and the hard work recommenced.

"We have been a good deal more than a quarter of an hour," said Mary at last, "and we do not seem to be any nearer than when we began."

What was the feeling that blanched Fitzmaur's cheek at these words? was it shame at the slur thrown upon his skill? or was it fatigue from his protracted exertions? or was it not rather that he knew that Mary and Alice would soon perceive what he had till then concealed, lest *they* should be frightened—namely, that, in spite of his straining every muscle, they were making no progress at all? The fearful fact is soon felt, though not a word has been said; and every cheek is pale, and each young heart in that boat trembles.

"I shall soon drop the oar," said Edward at

last; "my arms ache till they are almost numbed, and we are not advancing an inch."

Alice replied, in a faltering voice, "The current has forced the boat out of its course; we are gradually going down the river!"

"God have pity on us! have pity on us!" burst from the lips of all.

The boys have dropped their oars. A feeble attempt to recover the right track had only served to turn the boat round; and now the wind and the current are bearing it down the river with a frightful rapidity. Not very far off, the stream forms into a waterfall, and the children know well how near they are to that spot. Alice, her hands clasped and pressed against her forehead, faintly exclaims from time to time, "Oh, my father, my poor father!" Mary is clinging to her eldest brother, as if *he* could save her; and he in hopeless despair makes no answer, but keeps his head buried in his hands. While from Edward, poor Edward, usually so joyous, the most piteous heart-rending sobs are bursting in quick succession. But still the remorseless river hurries on the boat, regardless of the precious cargo it contains.

It has been already said that the river was dangerous; a little lower down from the ferry it was very much so. The current was too violent

to stem, while here and there it was broken into eddies by stakes driven deep into the bed of the river, or large stones. In passing through one of these tiny whirlpools a boat was in imminent danger of being upset, or so filled with water as to sink. So strong, indeed, was this clear and beautiful river, that in heavy rains it frequently broke down its banks, and laid the adjacent fields under water. Against one of these stakes the boat was driven, and there for a moment it remained fixed, while the current passing under it swayed it backwards and forwards, threatening either to set it afloat again or to overturn it. The unhappy little ones shouted loud for help. "Oh, if it would but remain fastened here till somebody happens to see us!" exclaimed one. Again they called for help, but their voices were not heard—the spot was a lonely one.

"We shall certainly all die," said Edward; "what shall we do?"

"A single movement will upset the boat," said Fitzmaur; "the best thing we can do is to remain quite still."

"Oh, if some one would but come! if some one would but come!" sobbed Mary.

"No one will come—we are all alone; no one hears us or sees us; nobody is near!" was the piteous exclamation of another; and the

sobs and moans that followed the words mingled their melancholy sound with the rushing of the waters, and then died away.

"We are not quite alone," remarked Alice; "God is with us; He is as close to us as He used to be to His disciples when they were frightened on the water."

"Oh, yes," answered Fitzmaur, "I forgot that; and so are the Angels near us: perhaps He will tell an Angel to come and help us, if we ask Him."

"I am sure He will help us in some way," answered Alice, "if we will but put our whole trust in Him."

"But He may mean us to die," said Mary, "that we may go to Heaven."

"Oh, if we were but good enough to go to heaven!" was a sigh and a prayer that burst from all, as the image of Death rose before them.

Death! what frightful shadows follow in the train of this dread king! How in the agony of that moment did every recent fault, every wrong temper, every disobedient act, or angry word, rush to the recollection of the young sufferers, more rapidly than it could possibly be told, yet with awful clearness! until a recollection that they were God's own children, and that

He had died for them, came to their minds and soothed them. They both hoped and trembled. The thought then first occurred to them, that perhaps they had erred in going on the river at all.

"Suppose we were to pray to God to help us, or else, if we must die, to take us to Heaven," suggested Fitzmaur.

"Oh, I don't wish to die yet," sobbed out Edward; "and I am so frightened, I can't recollect any prayers."

"Alice dear, you must know best," said Fitzmaur; "say something for us all; say something you are used to hear your father say in church."

Then rose Alice's voice clear and steady, in spite of the perils round her, in words which once and for ever hallow the spot from whence they pour: "Spare us, good Lord. Remember not, Lord, our offences, neither take Thou vengeance of our sins; spare us, good Lord, whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy most precious blood, and be not angry with us;" and each young heart and voice responded, "Spare us, good Lord." "From sudden death, good Lord, deliver us. In the time of our tribulation, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, good Lord, deliver us." Again arose their

blended voices in the pleading cry, "Good Lord, deliver us."

But the prayer was checked; for a violent gust of wind jerked the boat from its resting-place, and once more sent it floating down the river. But the solemn words had brought their answer, for the children were soothed and calmed; no more sobs or cries were heard from any of them; even Edward sat in comparative resignation.

"God will help us soon," said Alice; "I am quite sure He will, as we have asked Him."

"We are very near the waterfall," said Fitzmaur, with a slight shudder; "but I am sure He will save us."

On, on floated the boat for some yards further, until it was again arrested by being driven against a large stone in the middle of the stream, where it struck so violently as to shake the children out of their places. There it remained; not stationary, but tossed by the water banging against the stone, threatening, at each blow, to break the side and let in the water.

"I see no hope at all," said Edward; "we shall all be lost. Oh, will not God help us when we have prayed to Him?"

"We had better try to think about Heaven," said Fitzmaur. And then they bent their heads,

and endeavoured to collect their thoughts in prayer.

But the supplication was again changed into a cry for help, when, to their great joy, they saw their gardener, Andrew Jones, on the opposite side of the river. Hope arose once more, and they shouted and called him by name; all the strength of young life, reluctant to relinquish its hold, was in their cry. And what disappointment was in the shriek which rent the air, when at first the man did not hear them, and was about to pass another way! Could it, then, be decreed that all these happy lives, so recently commenced, were thus to be cut short in an hour? No; pitying Angels wafted the sound of their cry, and the man heard them and hastened to the spot; he saw their danger, and in an instant plunged into the stream.

"We are saved!" exclaimed the children, clasping their hands—"oh, thank God, thank God, we are saved!" And Edward, in his eagerness, was ready to spring out of the boat.

"Stay, stay, I entreat you," cried the man; "you are not saved yet; there is much to be done."

There was, indeed, much to be done; the great difficulty of reaching the spot was not yet achieved—it was not more than two or three

yards from the bank; but the stream was so violent and also so deep, that it was hardly possible to ford it. The poor man's first attempt failed; he was carried off his feet, and was obliged, by a hard struggle, to regain the shore. He then broke off from a tree a long thick staff, and with the help of this, firmly planting it in the bed of the river at each step, he contrived slowly to advance. With what intense anxiety the inmates of the boat watched his progress, may be imagined. At last he reached them; and having examined their position, he perceived that the only possible way of helping them was to carry them one by one on his shoulders, for to drag the boat either backwards or forwards was impossible. He also ascertained that the principal danger of their actual position was that of the boat sinking, for it was gradually filling with water; he did not consider it likely, from the way it rested against the rock, that it would be again set afloat. Speed, then, was absolutely necessary; there must be no talking, but instant action. The man proposed, to avoid the painful task of choosing which should be saved first, that each child should place himself on his shoulders in the order in which they happened to be placed in the boat; and to this plan Fitzmaur assented at

once, saying it was much the best way. By this means Edward was the first, then Alice, Mary next, and Fitzmaur himself was the last.

Slowly and steadily poor Andrew Jones proceeded; to hurry would have been worse than useless—it would have been dangerous, for the additional weight he was bearing, though it steadied his footing, made rapidity of progress more difficult.

Nevertheless each moment of delay was to him one of agony, for he doubted whether he could have time to rescue all before the boat sank. Fitzmaur made a few fruitless efforts to bale out the water with his straw hat; but it filled too rapidly, and his hat was soon torn by the weight of the water.

Now Edward has reached the bank in safety, and is watching in breathless anxiety the progress of the others. Alice is soon placed safely by his side; the brother and sister remain alone. The water rises higher and higher, the children cling closer to each other.

"O brother, brother!" sobs the terrified girl, "one of us must be drowned; why should it be you?"

"Go; I insist upon it," cries Fitzmaur, all the blood of his race rising to his brow. "It is all my imprudence, and I *will* be last."

These words are uttered in a tone which Mary dares not resist. One long kiss—Mary's heart is bursting. Fitzmaur tries to speak: "Tell Edward .... in case .... in case ...." but his voice falters, and Mary is torn from his arms. Poor Andrew's strength is failing, and his heart is breaking. Oh, that he should have to leave his loved young lord in such an awful position, and be utterly unable to help him!

"Cling to the stone when the boat sinks," he cries; "and God speed us!"

An ashy paleness has spread over the features of the noble boy, as he stands alone in that fearful spot. He sees the safety of the others, and feels that he is left behind. He tries to remember all he has learned of that happy place where he thinks he must be going —he joins his hands, and whispers a few words of prayer to that God who is now the only Being near him. Surely some bright answer has been vouchsafed; for a smile, hardly of earth, illuminates his face, while he vigorously prepares to make one manly effort for his preservation.

The boat was fast filling; he springs to the rock, and with that exertion jerks the boat some paces off, and then it sinks. The stone is smooth, and the friction of the water passing

over it has made it very slippery. There is nothing to hold by; the boy is supporting himself almost by muscular exertion. He tries in vain to grasp the unyielding rock—he slides—he falls! Andrew is but a yard from the spot; one moment more and he will be saved! Surely it cannot be; but the wind and the current seem cruelly to retard him. Fitzmaur is struggling in the water, and stretches out his arms imploringly. Poor Andrew, half frantic, strains every nerve to reach the spot. He reaches it indeed, but not till the waters have closed over that fair young head. Whither is the remorseless river bearing the brave, the noble Fitzmaur? Andrew has plunged after him, and for some minutes both are hidden from mortal sight.

The whole of this frightful occurrence has been witnessed by the three children on the bank, and their state of misery cannot be described. Mary's screams were painful to hear; and Alice for some minutes remained lying on the ground, her face hidden in the grass, almost stupified with terror. But quickly recollecting herself, she sprang to her feet, and exclaimed, "Edward, Mary dear, stop crying; we must call for help." Mary and her brother roused themselves at these words, and being too much bewildered with grief and fear to know

what to do, followed Alice's advice almost mechanically. She sent them off in one direction, while she went in another, to call people from every cottage, or to stop the first men they met upon the road. For her own part she seemed more to fly than to walk, and meeting a party of labourers, she hastily accosted them with, "Quick, quick to the river, or your young lord will be lost; Lord Fitzmaur is in the river; make haste, make haste—get ropes—there is not a moment to be lost!" "Lord Fitzmaur in danger! the young lord drowning!" The words spread like wild-fire, from mouth to mouth the cry was echoed, until at length a considerable number of men, women and children were collected to the spot. The pitiable condition of the three children excited general sympathy; Mary was almost faint from exhaustion, she had no longer voice to cry, but from time to time gave vent to her grief in a low moan.

At length a good-natured farmer, by name Fenton, seeing her hardly able to support herself, carried her in his arms, and tried, though fruitlessly, to soothe her. Fearing lest they should all get into further danger, he attempted to take them home; but they pleaded so earnestly not to be removed till Fitzmaur's fate should be certain, that he was obliged to con-

tent himself with keeping watch over them as they pressed up to the river's brink. Alice was not so much overcome as Mary; she clung stedfastly to the hope that Fitzmaur would be extricated from the water, and she knew that there were means of recovering persons from a state of insensibility; for she had not long previously witnessed the effects of drowning in a poor man's child, and watched Nurse Roberts use measures which restored it to life. It now occurred to her, that when at last Fitzmaur should be drawn out of the water, he would be in the same state that she had seen that child, and would require the same remedies; and she felt pretty sure that none of those she saw around her would have much notion of applying them. In thought deliberate, but in action prompt, Alice begged of the farmer to give her some little blank piece of paper; on this she wrote a line to her nurse, urging her to come with all speed, and bring with her whatever was requisite to recover Fitzmaur. Then, quick as lightning, she despatched a messenger to the Rectory.

In the mean time Andrew Jones, who had plunged into the stream after Fitzmaur, had succeeded in seizing the boy, but, already rather exhausted, he was quite unable to withstand the current, and was consequently borne by the

force of the river down some yards beyond the spot where the accident had occurred. He still, however, struggled with one arm, while the other encircled the senseless boy; and at length contrived to stop himself by grasping a stake in the middle of the river. There he remained a few minutes unable to help himself further, and his strength fast failing. But, in the mean time, the men whom Alice had arrested and drawn to the place of the accident, conjecturing that the stream must have carried them lower down, followed the course of the river till they saw the poor man's painful position. Without waiting for ropes, which one of them had run to find, others plunged in, and, wading up to the spot as well as they could, with some difficulty and danger, drew the two bodies (Andrew's being by this time nearly lifeless) to the bank.

When Mary heard that her brother was drawn out of the water, she revived suddenly; and with an enthusiasm equalling the despair she had just shewn, nothing could restrain her from rushing to the spot. Her kind protector endeavoured to keep her back, fearing that she would be shocked on first seeing him; but she sprang from his arms and ran on, followed by Alice and Edward. But there the sight that met her eyes made her cover them with her

hands, with a shriek that pierced every one's heart. She saw two men carrying the apparently lifeless body of her beloved brother, his features stiffened into the expression of agony they had taken when, in the stream, life had grappled with death. In vain the farmer endeavoured to convince her that it was probably only a temporary insensibility, from which he might recover; in vain Alice, herself trembling with terror, assured her she had seen a child brought to life again. Mary did indeed look up for a moment, to see if they were in earnest; but the pale terrified countenances round her were ill adapted to reassure her; and the state of her brother was, in her eyes, too real and too horrible to admit of explanation; she hid her face on the shoulder of her kind protector, and sobbed aloud. The latter, directing the men to carry Fitzmaur into his cottage, and bidding them keep his head in an erect position, followed with the three other children, still bearing Mary in his arms. Poor Alice, though she had tried to console Mary, was herself dreadfully frightened; for Fitzmaur looked more ghastly than that other child whom she had seen, and she doubted whether even Nurse Roberts' skill could avail in such a case. She was picturing to herself the agony of his parents should he be carried home

lifeless, as she followed him into the cottage, dragging Edward forward by the hand, who was so stunned by the sight that he seemed quite bewildered, and walked on almost mechanically.

Farmer Fenton, having brought the party into his cottage, began, with the help of his good wife, to do all in his power to recover Fitzmaur. And now Alice felt truly glad she had sent for her nurse; for nobody seemed to understand what to do. She directed them to put something hot to his feet, because, she said, she had seen her nurse do so; and she also thought she remembered seeing her warm the suffering child in her arms, and breathe upon him; but she was too bewildered to recollect exactly how this was to be done, and too frightened at Fitzmaur's ghastly appearance to do it herself. In fact, both she and Edward stood at a little distance from the apparently lifeless boy (who had been laid before the fire), shivering with terror; for their young eyes were not accustomed to so awful a spectacle. As for Mary, she never once moved or uncovered her face, and only by her continued hysterical sobs gave notice of her presence.

It may be imagined, therefore, with what joy the entrance of Nurse Roberts was hailed. She arrived a very little while after Fitzmaur

had been taken into the cottage, quicker than Alice's most sanguine hopes could have supposed possible; for it so happened that Mr. Russell had ordered his pony-chaise to go for him to a particular place at a certain hour, and it was nearly ready at the time the messenger reached the rectory. Without further ceremony, Nurse Roberts took possession of it, rightly judging that the emergency of the case would have excused a much greater liberty. "Cheer up, Mary," almost shrieked Alice as her nurse opened the door; "oh, cheer up,—all will do well now!" And the poor little girl clasped her hands, and was ready to cry for joy. The good nurse took Fitzmaur in her arms, laid him upon a bed in another room,—endeavouring, by gently pressing his chest with her hand, to restore the motion of the lungs, and afterwards using the accustomed restoratives. Farmer Fenton's two daughters stood, at her bidding, to chafe his hands and feet, or perform any other requisite office; but Fenton, seeing that Fitzmaur was well attended to, and that the other children were still standing in their damp clothes, bade his wife "attend to them, and soothe the lady Mary."

This latter injunction was at first no easy matter to obey. So much of terror was mixed

with Mary's grief, that she was quite hysterical, and incapable of listening to the assurance she received, that her brother would probably recover. The only recollection her mind seemed able to retain, was that of his last kiss, and of his look when Andrew Jones had carried her away, and the consciousness that her safety had been his loss; so that the only reply she could articulate to all Mrs. Fenton's entreaties that she would cheer up, was, "If I had not gone first, he would not have been drowned."

But Mrs. Fenton was one of those kind-hearted motherly housewives to be met with so often in the English cottage-home,—one who knew every frugal and cheerful art to make a husband's hearth happy, but nothing more; the modern march of learning not having begun in her youth. As for making any speeches of consolation, they would have been altogether out of her line; when she had said, over and over again, "Cheer up a bit, my pretty dears; don't ye take on so," her arguments were exhausted. But let no one despise these simple-minded efforts at giving comfort, which spring from a deeper source than many more studied. She drew the young mourners round the kitchen-fire, to dry their damp clothes; she made them drink something warm, and eat a bit of her own

bread; there was no use in their refusing—she would have it so; "for to be sure," she muttered, "they are all half fainting." Then finding that Mary baffled all efforts at soothing, she took her on her lap, laid the drooping head upon her bosom, and, rocking herself backwards and forwards, lulled her to sleep as she would have done an infant. God bless the simple-hearted charity of the poor! The plan succeeded; and in a few minutes Mary had sobbed herself into a heavy slumber.

They did not waken the sleeping child to announce the good news, soon brought from the next room, that Fitzmaur had given signs of returning life. They rightly judged that repose was the best comforter; and that her anxiety could only be lessened, not removed, till her brother should fully recover. But the intelligence was received with great joy by all the rest of the party; and it came at a very good moment; for the servant whom Lady De Courcy had originally sent on to meet them at the mountain, finding that they did not arrive so soon as he expected, had gone in quest of them, and had met some one who told him of the accident, and directed him to the cottage. He was now sent off to the Castle, to order a carriage for the children, with strict injunctions not

to alarm Lady De Courcy; but, if questioned, to state that all the children were doing well. And now, every one's feelings being partly relieved, the little group drew closely round the kitchen-fire, and for some time sat in silence. Fitzmaur's brave deliverers had also come in to dry their clothes, and they lingered on to learn tidings of their young lord. So unbroken was the silence that for several minutes prevailed, that nothing was audible except the low unsteady breathing of the sleeping child. Edward was the first who spoke; and it was to ask some one to inquire again how his brother was getting on. "Gradually better," was the reply.

"How glad I am!" said the poor boy, with a deep sigh. "Oh, dear, I wish he was quite well! Supposing he had not recovered, how wretched I should have been, that he had not gone first out of the boat instead of me. Should not you, Alice?"

Alice was about to answer, yes; but the recollection of her father rose as a mournful vision before her eyes. Her father—her lonely widowed father—his cheerless home! No, no; she could not wish to have been in Fitzmaur's place, and she was too truthful to pretend she did. She therefore answered, her eyes filling with tears, "Oh, no! I am so thankful I am saved;

but I should have been *very, very* miserable about Fitzmaur."

"Spoken like his Reverence's daughter!" exclaimed an old man who had been sitting for some time in the chimney-corner (he was a good old man, rather humoured by his betters, and nicknamed in the village Tom Plainspoken); then turning to Edward, he continued, "My lord, you have no more right to choose the moment of your death than you had the power to choose the moment of your birth. You have no right to call the good God to account for what He does. If He pleases to take your brother, you must not say that you could have gone instead."

"I did not mean to say wrong," answered Edward; "but I think it would be more dreadful to every one to lose Fitzmaur than any one else."

"*God's ways are the best,*" returned the good old man, stooping down and resting his face between his hands. "This is the third time I have looked upon the effects of drowning, and to one of those occasions is attached a story which proves my words,—*God's ways are the best.*"

"Oh, do pray tell us the story!" said both Alice and Edward.

"It maybe it would be too grave for the like of you," was the good man's rejoinder; "but

yet," addressing himself to Edward, "if you had heard it, you would not have said what you did just now."

"Oh, pray tell it," Edward cried; "I feel quite grave at this moment."

"It will divert their minds, poor children," said Mrs. Fenton, "and keep them quiet."

Some of the men who had gathered round seemed also curious to hear the story; and so, old Tom, clearing his throat, began as follows:

"Remember this only, before I tell my tale, that if this story were written in a book, it would have for title *God's ways are the best.* About forty years ago, when I was a lad, living in the village of A——, I used, with several other young fellows, my companions, to be very fond of stealing into a beautiful park close by, belonging to a very rich gentleman, whose name I shall not mention. We never did any mischief; but we were always turned out if discovered. The gentleman to whom the house and park belonged had inherited a large estate; we youngsters used to call him the old nabob. Rich as he was, he never seemed to think he had enough: it is a sad thing when the love of wealth has so tight a grasp on the heart of man. He had not an open hand for the poor, he was always engaged in speculations for the increase of his fortune; but

that only speculation which could not fail, he would not venture upon. He added field to field, enlarging his immense domains, enclosing himself in on every side, and shutting his gates against the poor. His lady was as haughty as he was fond of riches; she held her head high among the neighbours; she seemed to think she conferred a favour in associating with them, and she too cared little for the wants of others. I often think we humble folk would less envy the rich, if we considered how money sometimes hardens the heart.

"There was one object on which all the affections of both these wealthy people were centred; there was only one being who possessed the key that could open their closed hearts. This was their son, their only child. He was the idol to whom this amassed wealth was sacrificed; all was for him: this was the excuse. Talk to them of the duty of giving to the poor, of being courteous to all around; they would point to their son, and answer, it was all for Francis; it was a duty to provide for their child, it was a duty to keep only such company as would be fit for the position he would hold hereafter. Yes; the owner of such wealth was to found a family, he was to be a member of parliament, to obtain a baronetcy, perhaps in

the course of time a peerage. There was no end to the schemes of grandeur that flitted through the brain of the rich old man."

"And was Francis a good boy?" Edward asked; "did he deserve all their kindness?"

"Yes; he was a fine promising youth, with a kind open heart and a great love of generosity. Many a time, from his own pocket-money, would he relieve the beggar who had been spurned from his father's door. He had probably learned many good things from his tutor, who was a pious man, for the boy had some signs of a well-trained mind; he loved going to church, and had a reverent manner."

"How very happy!" exclaimed Alice; "because then when he grew up, his great wealth would help him to be useful, and so his pious training would turn to good account."

"It *did* turn to good account, Miss Alice, in God's own way. Not far from the park lived a clergyman's widow, who had seven sons and not wherewithal to bring them up. She was very poor; but being a well-educated lady, it would have been a sore grief to her to rear her sons to be anything but gentlemen. But yet the hard struggle she was put to, to give her two eldest a college education, perhaps few would credit; and when she had succeeded in this, she could

not afford the same to the others; but only trusted she might get them into the army or navy. But the bitterest trial she had was with Allan, her seventh son; he was a puny, sickly creature; at ten years old he looked like a boy of six; he was always ailing, and with his numerous illnesses he cost his poor mother more than all his brothers. What to do with her miserable boy the unfortunate widow really knew not; she could not afford to educate him for a learned profession, his bodily health would not admit of an active one, and to leave him without a profession was to leave him penniless. She often looked at him and sighed. Her neighbours, when they saw her trouble, would say to each other, 'What a mercy it would be if that poor lad were to die early!' So people talk of mercies: nobody ever seems to think that *God's ways are the best.*

"The rich and healthy Francis and the poor and sickly Allan were of exactly the same age, and they were frequently companions: it suited the generous disposition of the former to endeavour to cheer up his friend, and encourage him on to manly games.

"One winter's morning the two youths were together, and a sudden fancy seized Francis that he would skate; and, urged on by his braver

companion, Allan too ventured upon the ice. You perhaps presage the rest. There had been a hard frost; but a slight thaw had commenced, which the heedless boys did not perceive. They ventured on a part of the lake where the ice was thin; Francis was urging Allan forward—the ice broke—they disappeared. It was some time before their bodies were drawn from the water; and then the same measures were used to recover them that have just been resorted to for Lord Fitzmaur; but only one was thereby saved. My lord, probably you would have thought it better that Francis should be that one?"

"Oh, surely!" exclaimed Edward.

"So thought every one; but so had *not* decreed the all-wise God. The sickly, destitute youth, whose present existence was a burden to himself and his family, and whose future prospects were so gloomy, recovered: the vigorous and manly boy, the idol of his parents, the heir to thousands, the object of general love and admiration, died; God took him."

"How *could* that be for the best?" asked Edward.

"Listen, and you shall hear. The grief of the parents, words are too poor to tell; but it was a proud and stubborn grief, that refused to bow to the chastening Hand. They buried them-

selves in their own home, refusing alike the sympathy of friends and the consolation of religion. There was one object on whom they could not bear to look, and this was poor Allan; he was associated in their minds with all that was most dreadful to think of; they felt as if he were the murderer of their son, or at least as if his safety had proved the death of their child. So they took a bitter aversion to the harmless boy, and would turn away their eyes if ever he crossed their path. The widow, feeling deep compassion for their unhappy state, and though ignorant of their aversion to her son, still supposing that his presence might perpetually recall their sorrow to their minds, begged of a friend to receive him for a few months, and thus contrived to send him away. She hoped that the lapse of time might heal the wounded hearts; and her hope was partly realised. Though the father remained stubborn, God touched the heart of the bereaved mother, and she was softened.

"Another twelvemonth saw a wondrous change in the lady of that spacious hall. Sorrow had made her alive to the sufferings of others; and she, who had formerly been too proud to associate with her equals, was to be seen by the bedside of the poor, soothing their pain or re-

lieving their wants. The hardest heart could not have seen that afflicted woman, dressed in deep black, slowly walking through the village, her eyes bent on the ground, and her proud and once erect figure slightly stooping, as though sorrow had actually bowed her down, without melting into pity and raising a prayer for her. Poor lady! my heart bleeds for her even now; but the good God knows best the way to bring His children to penitence. A penitent she truly was; she gave the greatest proof of it mortal man can give—by conquering her own deepest feelings.

"It was little more than a year after the dreadful accident, that the widow-lady, Allan's mother, was surprised by a visit from the lady of the hall. She has since found it difficult to say whether astonishment at the honour, or pity for the traces of grief in the face of her guest, were uppermost in her mind as she bade her welcome. But the lady's visit was short. 'I come,' she said, 'to make you a request.' Her voice faltered; but, with a struggle, she continued: 'I wish to make such amends as I can for former faults, and it is in your power to help me.' The widow was at a loss how to answer. 'God took my boy,' resumed the afflicted mother, 'and restored you yours. From that moment I disliked

him, as though he had been the destroyer of my child. But God has been pleased to shew me my sin; and, as some poor amends, I wish to educate your boy instead of mine.' The astonished mother of course consented; and from that day the lady of the hall paid for poor Allan's education from her own private purse. She did not take him to live with her, because her husband had not made the same self-conquest as she had done; moreover, it would have been bad for the youth to have been brought up in a luxury which afterwards he would have been forced to renounce. But she placed him under a worthy tutor near the sea-side, where he improved in bodily health, as well as in learning.

"And now, young listeners, will you ask, in what God's ways had proved the best? Would it not have been enough that the hard heart should have become soft, and that the bereaved mother and the destitute widow should have found in each other a solace and a friend? Yes, this would have surely been enough, had nothing else happened to make men bow their judgment and acknowledge the wisdom of God.

"Many years passed on; Allan had outgrown the delicacy of his constitution, and had done credit to the advantages of his education. He had been brought up to be a lawyer, and was

getting on well in his profession, and he had married a pretty, accomplished lady. His heart was ever grateful to the kind friend to whom he owed every thing, and she in her turn had learned to love the object of her own bounty. Yes, she tenderly loved him whom once her unsubdued heart hated. His improved health, his success in the world, were to her like a token of God's forgiveness. Her poor husband meanwhile had sunk into the apathy of old age, indifference had taken the place of dislike; so that Allan needed no longer to conceal himself from his sight, or perhaps he hardly recognised in the graceful, handsome youth the sickly playfellow of his lost son. Sometimes if a fit of moroseness came over him, Allan's wife would play to him on the harp, and, like the Psalmist to Saul, drive the evil spirit from him with her sweet voice. This, however, was only during an occasional visit; for Allan's home was elsewhere.

"Such was the state of things, when a young man who had been many years abroad came forward, and declared that he had a prior title to the estates of the lady and her husband; and that the spacious hall and all the lands were his by law. It was passing strange, no one could credit it; and many thousand pounds were expended on both sides, while the matter went

through the tedious business of a law-suit. For my part, I have never pretended to understand the case up to this day—it was always far beyond my comprehension; but one part there was no misunderstanding, which was this: the man who had been thought so rich, who had lived in such luxury, was now master only of a few hundreds. There was something that they called a flaw in the entail; what that meant I really cannot tell you, and if I could, probably you would not care to hear; but the old nabob was ousted from his home; and even if his lady had not by this time made herself so much beloved by all, yet no one surely could have looked on such a reverse of fortune without sympathy.

"This blow was too much for the poor old man, already weakened by age. The storm which will only bend down the flexible shrub, allowing it to rebound again, will break the stubborn tree. And so it was with this afflicted pair. The husband, who had too long stubbornly refused to bow to the will of God, was now unable to bear this fearful shock, and died of a broken heart. But the lady, whose heart was flexible, rose from the trial refreshed and purified. Both, however, acknowledged that, had their precious son lived, the cup would have been tenfold more

bitter: to have seen him disinherited, for whom they had sacrificed even duty, would have been anguish too deep to bear. The last words of the poor old father were, 'God has done it mercifully.' But for the lady of the hall, the loss of wealth could only be an additional cause of indifference to the world,—an additional incitement to love the things of heaven. She deeply felt the mercy of God in His disposal of events; yes, and His wisdom too.

"And where was the afflicted one to find a home? Where, but in that of her faithful, grateful Allan? She had just enough left her to prevent her feeling herself a burden on him; and he, too, thankfully invited her to a shelter which he owed to her. There she passed the decline of her life, surrounded by happiness which had been the work of her own hands. Allan's children grew up round her, and called her *grandmother*. She enjoyed in poverty a peace of mind that wealth had failed to afford her. And when she thought of her long-lost boy, removed from an inheritance that would have failed him to one which could not fail him (for she had a good hope of him), but which, in after years, he might have lost through his own fault; and then looked at the animated faces that always smiled on her, she was wont to press her hands upon

her breast, and humbly say, ' God's ways are the best.'

" And now," continued the old man to Edward, " if I ventured just now to give you a bit of my mind too plainly, I hope this pretty story will bring me forgiveness."

" Oh, thank you for telling it to us!" cried both he and Alice; " we will tell it to Mary another day. It is, indeed, interesting; I don't wonder at your saying so often that God's ways are the best."

There was not time to talk over the story; for Nurse Roberts opened the door, to tell them that Fitzmaur was recovered, and that they might come and see him. Every thing else was forgotten in an instant; they called Mary, and all three were about to rush tumultuously into the room; but they were checked, and desired to be very quiet, for that Fitzmaur had suffered a great deal of pain, and could not yet feel quite well. They then entered on tiptoe; but when the young sufferer turned his eyes upon them and smiled, Mary could not restrain herself, but, bursting into tears, ran up to the bedside and covered him with kisses.

We will not attempt to describe what passed between them, now that Fitzmaur was able to speak, and to listen to her account of all she

had endured when she thought she had lost him. She told him of her terror when she saw the waters close over him, and of her misery when he was brought back to her lifeless; in short, the reaction of joy after grief had made poor Mary nervous, and there was danger of her making Fitzmaur nervous too. The nurse warned her of this; and the consideration that she might make her brother ill, checked her a little,—though her flushed cheek and excited manner shewed the effort it was to her to control herself.

In the mean time Alice had not spoken; her heart was full almost to choking, and she felt it a great relief that every one was so occupied with Fitzmaur as not to notice her; for just at first, if any one had even looked at her, she would have sobbed outright. But no one did, so she had time to recover herself. She did not go up to Fitzmaur; she thought it natural that the brothers and sister should be all in all to each other just then, and she was afraid of being in the way. Still she could not help hoping that Fitzmaur would be glad to see her too; and when, in a short time, Mary began to relate to him how kind and thoughtful Alice had been, and that no one else would have dreamed of sending for Nurse Roberts, how generous she

thought it of Mary to remember her at such a moment!

But this overflow of feeling was going a little too far. Mrs. Roberts had not had the heart to stop it at first, but she now peremptorily bade them desist; and carefully wrapping up the children to keep them from cold, she placed the young Fitzmaurs in the carriage, and prepared to take her own charge home. Before leaving the cottage, however, Fitzmaur thanked Mrs. Fenton and the men who had saved him, most heartily; and shaking hands cordially with those who were pointed out to him as having been his bravest deliverers, he desired them to come to the castle next morning, that his father might also thank them.

And now once more in her quiet, happy home, Alice needs no longer to restrain her feelings; but in her father's arms, and seeing that even his eyes are moistened as he thinks how nearly he had lost his treasure, she lays her head upon his shoulder and cries to her heart's content. Then looking up into his eyes, "Father," she says, "when I was in the boat, and I feared we should all be lost, I thought of you .... of your lonely room .... of your .... Oh, dear father, I prayed to God, and how good He is!"

And was not Nurse Roberts truly happy and grateful as she gave her favourite a warm supper, and placed her in her little bed? It is true she pretended to be very stoical, and to scold Miss Alice for getting into such a scrape; but she every now and then rubbed her eyes with the corner of her apron in rather a suspicious way; and when the child put her arms round her neck, exclaiming, "What a dear, good, useful Nursey you are!" she was obliged to give up all pretence.

Mr. Russell, who next to his own Alice loved his children at the castle, when he had seen the former laid in her bed and had given her another kiss, walked over to inquire after Fitzmaur. He was admitted; and he learned that the boy was better and asleep, while his mother, his grateful mother, sat watching by him. Mary too, fatigued and excited, was in bed; but frolicking Edward, beside himself with joy, was capering about, every now and then shouting, "Hurrah for Fitzmaur!"

"I say, Rector," said that personage known by the name of Uncle John, "what think you that impudent young chap, Edward, tells me? He says I am the cause of to-day's events,—that it is all my fault. The fact is, I fear I did forget that little pitchers have long ears."

Lord John then related to Mr. Russell the observations he had made, and which his nephew over-hearing had turned to so much account, respecting the propriety of judging for ourselves of the utility of certain laws and rules.

"I am afraid you forgot something more than that," replied Mr. Russell, smiling.

"Oh, yes," retorted the other, laughing; "I know what you mean; I am afraid you think me too heterodox to be entitled to give that saucy fellow the thrashing I have promised him. Well, I declare, such a tragical parody upon one's theory is almost enough to make one give it up in despair."

"Something will be gained," said Mr. Russell, "if it obliges you to own *that only those who have the right to impose laws have the right to dispense with them.*"

It need hardly be said, that Lord De Courcy liberally rewarded the gallant men who had rescued his son from death, and especially Andrew Jones. They came the next morning as desired; but they came not alone,—the news of Fitzmaur's danger and deliverance had spread with rapidity, and a number of labourers and tenants collected before the windows of the castle to inquire after him. Lord and Lady De Courcy went out to speak to them, and thanked

them for their kindness, assuring them that their son was extraordinarily well, considering all things; and then a shout of satisfaction rose long and loud. But when they were told that Fitzmaur's window was just above them, and that noise would disturb him, then the hush that passed from lip to lip was like the low murmuring of a rising breeze. They filed off like a school of children trying to be quiet till they should get upon the play-ground, and when at a safe distance, they again waved their hats and shouted. Surely Lord De Courcy must at that moment have deeply felt, what much nobler possessions than land or gold are the affectionate hearts of faithful dependents.

CHAPTER VIII.

LASTING PLEASURES.

When Fitzmaur opened his eyes the following morning after a refreshing sleep, the first object they rested upon was his mother, watching over him. She had given orders that he should not be disturbed; and for some little time she had been standing by him, listening with pleasure to his regular breathing, and looking at his cool and rosy cheeks, telling plainly that he was none the worse for his adventure. Mary and Edward had also crept in on tiptoe; and when their brother moved, they ventured up to his bedside, which they had refrained from doing for fear of awakening him.

"We are come to your levee," said Edward; "and there are two others waiting for admittance outside."

These were the two baby-brothers, who had just been made to understand that Fitzmaur had been hurt, and were now brought to console themselves with a romp upon his bed. Fitz-

maur kissed them and played with them, and let them do all the mischief they pleased, so dear did he think them at that moment. He felt as if he loved his parents and brothers and sister more than ever; or rather, as if he had never known before how much he loved them. He thought it very kind of them to come in to see him the first thing; and he felt as if he could have cried, without knowing why. But it was his mother towards whom he was yearning; and when the little ones were taken away, he threw his arms round her neck, and said,

"Mamma, I hope you are not displeased with me for going on the river."

"No, my love," replied his mother; "not displeased now; for you have had punishment enough. It was certainly an act of disobedience; but it was not done wilfully; you intended to do a kindness to another; but you have now learned by experience, that even a good motive does not sanction the slightest act of disobedience. You should be thankful that you have learned this lesson in your childhood; for some people do not learn it till they are grown up, and some never learn it at all, but go on, all their lives, trying to do good in an unauthorised way, as if the end could sanctify the means."

"Dear mamma," said Mary, "so many things that I had done wrong came into my head while I was in the boat, at that dreadful moment,—some that nobody knows any thing about, and others that are known. I was very ill-behaved in the school-room one or two mornings ago,—Miss Dalton intended to tell you, but she did not, when I told her I was sorry; and I remembered that so distinctly! But the worst thing of all—the thing which frightened me the most—was a feeling that will shock you very much, if I tell it to you." Poor Mary hid her face in her mother's shoulder: "It was the day before Mr. Russell told us that beautiful story. You had had a dinner-party, and Augusta and I had played on the piano-forte. One of the ladies remarked, in Augusta's hearing, that she was quite as pretty as I, if not prettier, and certainly much more accomplished. Augusta repeated this to me; and I was so jealous and envious, so angry at not being the most admired, that I almost disliked Augusta for it. Oh, I was so wicked! I was quite cross and snappish to her the whole day; and it really was not her fault. I do not think Augusta knew what was in my mind, for I was ashamed to tell any one; but I cannot help telling you now, for I feel so sorry."

"I hope my little Mary will never indulge those feelings again," said Lady De Courcy; "for envy is a deadly sin."

"Oh, no, mamma, I hope not," replied Mary, with tears; "I cannot tell you how dreadful those feelings appeared to me when in the boat. When I thought every minute I was to die, and that then I should have to stand before God, and be judged for those envious wicked feelings, I was so frightened. It was terrible to think of never seeing Augusta again till we met at the Judgment-seat!"

Poor Mary said this, still concealing her face. She could not have given a stronger proof of real penitence, than by confessing her fault thus before her brothers; for she had a great dread of being laughed at, and her brothers, like other boys, were rather fond of quizzing. But if she could have read their minds, she would have perceived how little disposed for laughing either of them was on this occasion. Fitzmaur was wondering within himself, whether, if he had committed a similar fault, he would have had courage to acknowledge it so openly: and Edward was muttering, though not aloud, "What an idiot that lady was, whoever she might be, to think Augusta as nice as Mary!"

Lady De Courcy kissed her little girl, and

said to her, "You must try, dear child, to conquer your besetting fault—that love of admiration. You are too fond of being praised, and that spoils even good actions."

"Yes," said Mary, "I am sure it is wrong; I remember Mr. Russell said, in his sermon last Sunday, 'If we seek the praise of man, we shall not have the praise of God.'"

After this there was a pause of some minutes; the little reasoners seemed very thoughtful, which was certainly not unnatural, considering all that had happened. At last Fitzmaur broke silence.

"Mamma, I should like to-morrow to be a very happy day to all of us; I should like it to be the happiest birthday I ever spent."

"Your best way, then, would be to lengthen it," Lady De Courcy replied.

"How is that?" asked Mary; "a long day is not thought pleasant."

"I mean, to lengthen the pleasures of the day," said her mother, "by making them lasting."

"How are we to do that?" Mary again inquired.

"By so spending the day," said Lady De Courcy, "that you will look back upon it with pleasure long after it is past. Mere amusement

ends with itself; but a well-spent day leaves a feeling of happiness behind it, which may perhaps last for ever. Let not the day pass without some proof of gratitude to God for all He has done for you, particularly for His care of you yesterday, by doing some act of kindness to your fellow-creatures. Make good resolutions to-morrow, and try, by God's grace, to keep them through the coming year. Then if, in a few months hence, you have made some little improvement, and can trace the beginning of it to this birthday, surely you will have lengthened the pleasures of the day, and all the valuable part of it."

Mary remained with her head reclined against her brother's bed, thinking over what her mother had said, for some minutes after she had left the room with Edward; Fitzmaur was also thinking; and neither spoke for a little while. Mary's reflections were soon interrupted by the entrance of her maid, who begged her attendance for a short time, to have her dress tried on; adding, that she must be extra well-dressed on the morrow, as she would be queen of the day. Mary lingered a few minutes before she obeyed the call. Queen of the day! These words brought many recollections to Mary's mind. The angry tempers that she had indulged on a former occasion when the subject

had been first discussed, and the vanity that had filled her heart ever since when she had thought of the honours of that day,—all these things came before her vividly now. Could she ever have a more favourable opportunity of carrying out her resolutions, or of following her mother's advice, than the present? What better act of self-denial than the relinquishing the pleasure she had been prizing so much too dearly? Mary resolves—hesitates—resolves again—wavers—wonders if her brother will consent—looks up, and sees him smiling,—can he have guessed her thoughts?

"Brother," she says, "I almost wish not to be queen to-morrow. Should you mind having Augusta; or doing without a queen?"

"No, dearest sister," he replies; "any thing you like. In fact, it would be better; we have hardly been goodnatured enough to Augusta lately."

Mary is at once light-hearted and happy; she behaves so well in the school-room all day that her governess is quite pleased with her; and directly play-time is come, she seeks Augusta and tells her that Fitzmaur would like to have her for his queen, and that she is quite willing to give up the place of precedence. Augusta's ideas could not compass an act of voluntary

and disinterested self-denial, — she was all astonishment.

"Have you and Fitzmaur quarrelled?" she asked.

"Certainly not," replied Mary, rather indignantly.

"Oh, then, I suppose your mamma told you to let me be queen," continued the other.

Mary felt half inclined to be angry; but she checked herself, and said, "No, it is my own doing; I have my private reasons for it."

"It is really very goodnatured of you," cried Augusta, kissing her; and away she ran in great delight to tell her mother. Lady Charles was much pleased and lauded Mary to the skies; telling every one that she was an amiable, retiring, sweet-tempered girl. Mary felt at first disposed to be flattered at so much praise; but then the thought arose in her mind—"Aunt Charles would not say all this, if she knew the envious thoughts towards her own Augusta which I indulged the other day;" and so the recollection of her fault kept her from vanity.

That same afternoon all the juvenile party were on the terrace, Alice included; and they were talking with great eagerness of the pleasures of the morrow — they were planning schemes for the enjoyment of every hour. To begin with,

Alice must spend the whole day at the Castle; she must come to breakfast. Alice doubted if that would be possible. "Why so?" was the instant demand. Alice hesitated, and tried to avoid answering; except by merely stating, that there was a walk she *must* take early in the morning; but that then she would join their party for the rest of the day. It was of no use seeking to evade her pertinacious inquisitors; they at last extorted from her, that she must, of necessity, take the clothes she had been making to Widow Barton's family the very next day; because, she added, "I have already delayed too long; I cannot take them to-day, because my nurse has been busy, and is not able to walk with me; and therefore I must attend to that duty the first thing to-morrow."

Edward suggested, that "if old Nursey is to take the walk, it will not hurt her to carry the clothes."

But Alice answered, that on this occasion she was sure her father would be better pleased if she took them herself. Her companions then made various inquiries respecting the Bartons, and she told them their melancholy case, adding, that though they were now supplied with the necessaries of life, their rent remained unpaid; and that, so long as Johnny continued ill, they

could not possibly raise the sum required; and that he was unlikely to recover. Fitzmaur inquired the amount of the sum. Alice said, she thought it was about three pounds.

Fitzmaur was silent for five minutes; but in that short period a scheme was originated and perfected within his mind. He wished to follow his mother's directions, and prove his gratitude to God by trying to please Him; he wished to begin his birthday well, and bring a blessing upon it, and the present seemed an opportunity purposely presented to him.

"Mary," said he, "would it not be delightful to walk to poor Mrs. Barton's with Alice, and give her some money to help her with her rent?"

"Yes, very," replied Mary; "but I am afraid we have not enough to make up three pounds, we spent so much at the beginning of the month. I have only ten shillings left."

"And I have ten shillings," Edward said; "I wish I had more; but she is welcome to that."

"I have fifteen shillings left," said Fitzmaur; "all that together will amount to one pound fifteen. That will help her very much, though it is not all the sum; will it not, Alice?"

"Oh, yes," cried Alice, clapping her hands

with delight; "how happy she will be! I really think it will make Johnny well. How very good of you! Widow Barton will easily make up the remainder of the sum, because she will feel so much encouraged to persevere."

"I think it is much better of you, Alice, to have made clothes for them," said Mary; "because you have given up your playtime for it: mamma says there is often more self-denial in giving one's time than one's money."

Alice, colouring deeply, replied, "Oh, but you know nothing about that; please do not talk of it."

Augusta all this time had been listening to the conversation, and wondering whether her cousins would ask her to join them. She was sadly divided in her own mind; for she had a good deal more money in her purse than they had, because her mamma always kept her liberally supplied—too liberally for so young a girl; but she did not like to part with it—she wanted it for a purpose of her own. On the other hand, she was ashamed of appearing less generous than the others, so that she did not quite know what to do; she almost hoped they would not ask her, yet she knew she should feel affronted if they did not. But they did invite her to join their party and their subscription. Fitzmaur thought

it would be illnatured not to do so, though it must be confessed he felt he should enjoy the walk better without her.

"I will give half-a-crown," said Augusta, with hesitation; "I am sorry I cannot give more, but mamma has often desired me not to spend all my money at once, because then I should have none if any more urgent case was to offer itself. I am afraid it will seem very little by all of yours."

"Oh, there will be no seeming," said Fitzmaur, "for we shall put it all together, and give it in the lump."

"What! shall you not tell any one how much you each give?" Augusta asked, surprised yet not displeased at the intelligence.

"No, certainly not," exclaimed Mary; "and mind you say nothing about it; at any rate, nothing about *our* contributions."

"Well, I cannot see the use of making a secret of it, as if you were ashamed of it," said Augusta; "it is as if you were doing something wrong."

"Not at all," replied Fitzmaur; "mamma told us this very day, that when we do anything right—such as an act of charity—we ought to do it quite secretly, so as not to be praised."

"My father has often told me the same,"

said Alice; "he says that is the meaning of not letting the left hand know what the right hand doeth; and that if we obtain the praise of man, half the value of the act is lost."

"I must say, I cannot understand the sense of it," replied Augusta, rather tartly, because she felt a little ashamed; "but you may be quite sure I shall say nothing about it, if you do not wish it."

"I do not think it is hard to understand," replied Alice, "that we have no right to expect a reward in Heaven, if we only think of having one on earth."

"Really, Miss Alice," said Augusta pettishly, "you are very sublime; but it is far beyond me."

"It may easily be that," said Edward, planting himself before her, and looking her full in the face. "Pray, Miss Augusta, can you understand this much—you can't eat your cake and have it?"

"You are very rude," said Augusta, quite provoked; "but I assure you, my mamma would tell you I was right. She often says that we ought to let what we do be known, for an example to others. Many persons will only give in charity if they see their betters give. For that reason, she made a present of a beautiful

silver plate to our little parish church, to collect the money on Sundays, instead of the little bags that were formerly used. As she always gives largely, it encourages others to imitate her; besides that people are ashamed to give too little when it is an open plate. Mrs. Thornton, a lady of the neighbourhood, used to give only one shilling, and now she gives five, because the plate is carried into our pew immediately after it has been into hers. So you see mamma's gift was a double charity; and I assure you it is a beautiful plate, and has her name engraved upon it, with the day it was presented to the clergyman."

Augusta's cousins made no reply to this; they felt, they could hardly tell why, that there was something wrong in this principle, but they did not fully understand the subject. Alice was better informed, for she had recently heard her father and another clergyman discussing that very point. She had heard them say, that almsgiving was a gift to God, and this, of all places, especially in Church, His own House; that there our gifts are solemnly consecrated to Him; and that to give from any other motive than pure love to Him, to harbour any wish that others should see our munificence, not only makes the act null and void, but is actually

a profanation. However, she did not think it was her office to criticise the conduct of her elders, so that no remark was made by any of them.

But we have been too long talking of what was to be. The birthday came at last, and with it a bright sun and light hearts. Immediately after the morning service, the little party set out on their proposed expedition, permission having been readily obtained, as Nurse Roberts was to accompany them, to see, as she said herself, that they played no pranks. The agreement was, that the Fitzmaur party should repair to the rectory for breakfast, and walk with Alice afterwards. The young hero of the day was glad by this means to see his friend Mr. Russell early in the morning, before they met in a crowd of company, for there was to be a large party at the castle that evening. Mr. Russell, too, was glad to have the society of his little favourites; and Alice was exceedingly proud of doing the honours in her own house; she jumped about, offering strawberries to one, and tea to another, in a prodigious fuss; in short, a breakfast at the rectory was a great treat to every one. Poor Augusta looked, just at first, rather like a fish out of water—for, be the truth confessed, she was a little afraid of Mr. Russell; but he soon

contrived to put her more at her ease by good-naturedly paying her little attentions, and talking to her on topics on which he supposed she would be most at home, till she was at last forced to acknowledge to herself, that she ceased to wonder at her cousins being so fond of him. But to his own noble Fitzmaur he was particularly affectionate; and also to Mary—for Alice had secretly informed him of the latter's act of self-denial in yielding to Augusta the honours of the day; and though he thought it better to make no remarks, he loved her for it.

"I think this will be a happy day to you all," said he at last, as they rose to depart. "I shall ask you this evening if it has been so. I hope it will, and that it may be the beginning of a happy year."

And now the young readers must, in their own imaginations, shift the scenes and view our heroes and heroines in the cottage where lies the dying boy. Such are the transitions of life, from the merry party to the house of woe; and often are these transitions as sudden as the shifting of scenes upon the stage. They must also picture to themselves, what cannot be so well described, the gratitude of widow Barton at their unexpected relief, and, above all, the gratitude of poor Johnny himself.

"There, mother," he cried, "was I not right? You did well to give over fretting."

Mrs. Barton had tried to resign herself, since Mr. Russell's conversation with her; and her son had perpetually reminded her that help would come at last. She was quite overjoyed at so considerable an assistance to her means; and the clothes Alice had made fitted very nicely. How could they all find words for their feelings? They curtsied first to one and then to another, and at last, unable to contain herself, Ellen burst into tears.

"Oh, my dear lady!" she said to Mary, "this may cheer poor Johnny, and make him recover, for the thoughts of the rent being due has weighed heavily on his mind; and if so, you cannot know all you and your noble family have done for us. May God reward you! You know perhaps what it is to dread the loss of a brother."

Yes; Mary did know it, having so recently felt all that dread, and she could sympathise; nay, Ellen's distress reminded her so keenly of her own feelings on that memorable occasion, that she was constrained to mingle her tears with those of the sorrowing sister. In the mean time, Alice had drawn near to Johnny's bed, and had taken his hand; and he had whispered

to her, that he felt more strongly than ever that his end was drawing near. He added: "I had such a bright happy dream last night, Miss Alice; oh, that it might come true! I dreamed that I was in a beautiful place, with all the glorious Saints, and that there I was praying for you. One part of it at least shall come true, for I will pray for you with all my heart." Fitzmaur, coming up to his side at this moment, the dying boy exclaimed, "God bless you, my lord; God bless you, and reward you. I wish you many happy returns of this day, though I shall not live to welcome them. Many bright years lie before you, and many noble actions, no doubt, will be done by you; but pardon my boldness, if I remind you, that we shall both stand together at last before the great God. Perhaps the spot in your life, that you will then look back upon as the brightest, will be the moment you succoured the widow and the orphan." Fitzmaur never forgot that speech.

"Do you know, Fitzmaur," said Alice, as they returned home, "I have been thinking all this morning of the gentle lady that my father told us of. I have been wondering whether those happy Saints know what is going on here."

"But what made you think of the Lady Margaret in particular?" Fitzmaur inquired.

"Because," returned Alice, "I thought that if she could watch over what passed on earth, she would love the present Bertram Fitzmaur as much as she loved her own little restless Bertram; and she must be pleased at the way he has begun his birthday."

"Now mind, Edward," said Mary to her brother, "that your little chattering tongue does not let out what we have done, or it will quite spoil the day."

"Never fear," said Edward; "what is there to tell?"

The case was not so extremely easy, however, as Edward supposed; and the reader shall be informed why. It happened that same afternoon, that Lady De Courcy entered the luncheon-room, where several persons were assembled (for some of the guests who were to stay at the castle arrived early), with an open note in her hand. "This," she said, "is from Mrs. Dawson, begging of me to subscribe to a school, which a friend of hers in Ireland is anxious to build; and to ask my friends to do the same. She describes the case to be an urgent one; it is a district where the population has increased very much within late years, and where there is no school within many miles. I am a bad beggar," continued Lady De Courcy; "so I shall con-

sider my task fulfilled when I have subscribed a little myself, and stated the circumstances."

"There's a mighty fuss always about schools in Ireland," said Sir Joseph Screw, an absentee Irish landlord; "and great good it does 'em. What's the good of educating the poor above themselves? If you'd just teach 'em to pay their rents regularly, that's the best lesson they could learn."

"Charity begins at home, that's my maxim," said Doctor Scrape, nodding his head three times very slowly, as if he was weighing each word accurately. "What's the use of asking us to send our money over to Ireland, when there are so many clamorous at home? It's not fair." The doctor was an old bachelor with six thousand a year, whose oldest friend could not recollect ever having seen him with a new hat, and who was so much calumniated as to be reported to live upon a shilling a day.

"Oh, dear sweet Ireland!" exclaimed Miss Arabella Primrose. "Did you not tell me, mamma, that the people in Ireland have beautiful black hair, and don't wear shoes and stockings? Oh, yes; and it's called the Emerald Isle. Sweet romantic country! I am sure I'll do anything for Ireland. Here is half a sovereign to begin with."

"Come," said Lord De Courcy, "without disputing Miss Primrose's taste for bare feet, we must admit that she has set us a good example, and I recommend that we follow it." So saying, he laid a five-pound note on the table.

"I'll not give a farthing," cried Uncle John, "unless I read the good lady's letter; for that's half the fun." And then he seized the manuscript, in spite of Lady De Courcy's protestations, and read aloud the following specimen of epistolary style:—

"DEAR MADAM,

"I must apologise for the liberty I take, ma'am, in writing to your ladyship when I am so soon to have the honour and gratification of seeing you, to celebrate sweet Lord Fitzmaur's birthday, whom I wish many happy returns of the day; but I am sure, dear Lady De Courcy, you will excuse me when you know the mission of love of which I am the unworthy advocate. A school, dear madam, is sadly wanted, as my dear friend, Mrs. Julia Hutchins (an excellent truly Christian woman, ma'am, if you knew her), writes me, in the parish of Ballybotherbull, post town, Killall, in Ireland. It is ten miles, dear Lady De Courcy, from Killall, and that is the nearest town. There is a frightful population of perishing souls, increased immensely within the last few years, all dying for lack of a school. My dear Christian friend, ma'am, tried

to collect money by sending round printed cards to all her friends for sixpenny contributions; but she did not get much more than paid the expenses of the printing and postage. I am sure, dear Lady De Courcy, I need say no more to interest your ladyship in this most interesting case; and if you will kindly excite your guests to compassion, and your dear sweet little darlings, your ladyship might give me the result this evening, which is why I trouble you now, because to-morrow morning I send off a packet to my dear friend, who is anxious to begin building as soon as possible. Trusting that will plead my excuse, I remain, dear madam,

"Your ladyship's obedient and obliged
"PENELOPE DAWSON."

"A heart of stone would melt after this appeal," said Uncle John, opening his purse with great preparation and extracting therefrom—five shillings; Lady Charles Fitzmaur and others subscribed also, and then the former turned to her little girl and said, "Augusta my love, have not you something to give? You would like me to write your name down among the subscribers, should you not?"

"Oh, certainly," exclaimed Augusta; "I will give seven shillings to the poor little Irish children." Augusta wondered if her cousins would keep to their resolution now that, having

nothing to give, all the company would think her the most generous.

"My Augusta is so liberal," said Lady Charles to another lady, "she is always ready to give her money. I keep her fully supplied, because I think it is good for children to have the means of answering such calls."

"I am sorry I cannot give more," said Augusta, with apparent humility, counting the money into her mother's hand; "but I had to give part of my money this morning to a poor family in great distress."

"Dear child!" exclaimed her fond parent, "what, have you been already giving in charity? It is not fair to ask you for so much." And then Lady Charles repeated the fact to every one, and Augusta's generosity was loudly extolled, and sundry compliments were paid to Lady Charles on the good training which had produced such pleasing results.

Meanwhile her cousins and Alice sat looking on; and when Uncle John roared out to them from the opposite side of the room to produce their purses, Fitzmaur replied, that they were very sorry, but they had no money left.

"O you extravagant rogues!" was the rejoinder.

"Augusta is always provident with her

money," remarked Lady Charles, "and that enables her to be charitable."

Edward's patience was beginning to ebb. "Well, that's rather good," he muttered; "if there's not Miss Augusta carrying off all the praise for her paltry little half-crown, while we" . . . . .

"Hush, dear Edward," said Mary, "remember your promise. What is the use of being praised, when we are trying to do things like the gentle Lady and St. Anselm, and all those holy people?"

"I don't want to be praised myself," said Edward, "but it's too bad to see Augusta" . . .

"Never mind Augusta, you simpleton," said his brother.

In the mean time Augusta quite wondered at her cousins, and thought them very silly; however, she tried to persuade herself that it was no affair of hers, as they had begged of her not to relate their share in the deed she had disclosed. Nevertheless, though this was strictly true, she felt, she could not tell why, ashamed to look round at them.

But something arrested the attention of all, and drove Mrs. Dawson, schools, Ireland, and charity, out of every body's mind. What was this? What was it that drew every one, young

and old, with a rush to the window? It was a beautiful grey pony, crowned with flowers, that was led prancing to the hall-door. All went out to look at it,—it was a perfect animal, about fourteen hands high, of a dark iron-grey colour. Fitzmaur's heart fluttered; but he scarcely ventured to speak out.

"Try it," said Lord De Courcy, nodding to him.

"Try it, you humbug!" said Uncle John, with a knowing wink; "and don't pretend to look so innocent."

Fitzmaur required no further bidding; in a moment he had vaulted to the saddle, and was galloping round the front of the house, to the admiration of every one. The pony was perfect in every movement: if its predecessor was Prince, this was worthy to be called Monarch.

"Papa, is this for me?" exclaimed the happy boy. The answer was in the affirmative. Oh, how delighted he was! How Edward shouted—how Mary clapped her hands—and how pleased, truly pleased was Alice, who had thought herself the innocent cause of the death of Prince.

We had better leave Fitzmaur and Edward awhile with the newly-acquired treasure; for nothing, I believe, that was not of extraordinary occurrence could have drawn their attention to

any other object for at least two hours. Besides, several friends were expected: there were their cousins the Mandevilles,—boys who were, or fancied they were, excellent judges of horse-flesh; and John and Spencer Herbert, two friends of Fitzmaur's. All these must be taken at once to the stables to admire the pony; and once there, all who know boys are aware that it is not an easy matter to get them away again.

But as it is by no means necessary that we should remain there too, we will at once come to that portion of the birthday which was the most important part, namely, the evening-entertainment.

It was one of those beautiful warm summer evenings, on which one almost involuntarily lingers out of doors enjoying the breathless twilight, delaying to the very last the ungracious necessity of shutting out the balmy air. It was consequently quite practicable to accede to the children's request—that the dance should be on the grass; and it was proposed, that at seven o'clock the dance should begin, all amusing themselves promiscuously together—ladies and gentlemen, servants and tenantry—for about two hours; and that then the drawing-room party should retire to spend the rest of the evening in such games as the King and Queen

of the day should decide upon, leaving the others to enjoy themselves unrestrained.

In what a flutter of excitement was Augusta as the evening approached! The garland, wreathed into the form of a crown, was ready for her hair; and when her maid had carefully placed it on her head, and fastened it with a diamond pin (lent to her by her mother for the occasion), how often and often did she turn to look at its effect! She thought all the young ladies of the party would envy her for the richness of her attire; and the words, "graceful young heiress," which she had so often heard applied to her, kept running in her head. A number of bouquets had been made, the largest of which was for herself, the rest she was to distribute among the ladies; and this she did, it must be admitted, with an ease and a grace worthy of her temporary royalty. She was introduced as the Queen of the evening; and even the Mandevilles, who, like most schoolboys, had very little taste in those matters which Augusta thought of great importance, acknowledged "she would certainly be a very pretty girl if she was not *so* conceited." Conscious that admiring eyes were upon her, Augusta took her place with Fitzmaur at the head of the dance, and right merrily she tripped along.

And how did Mary keep her resolutions? Was she still willing, when it came to the point, to yield so much precedence to Augusta? That evening, a few minutes before her maid came to dress her, she had retired to her room, for the other young ladies were either resting themselves or dressing, and her brothers were at high romps with the boys. Mary, therefore, sat in her room, her little head resting on her hand, deep in thought. "I wonder," thought she, "if Augusta is much obliged to me for letting her be Queen—she ought to be; but I do not think she is, she seems to take it as all a matter of course. Then, again, nobody will know that I might have been Queen, and that I gave it up; people will think it is all because Augusta is more accomplished and of greater consequence. I wonder if Mr. Russell knows it. I wish"... Mary's cogitations were interrupted by a noise at the other side of the room, proceeding from the cage where she kept two pretty canary-birds. The little creatures were fighting with all their might about a small crumb of sugar, which one wanted to seize from the other; they were pecking at each other, flapping their wings, and puffing out their little breasts in a very great fuss. "You silly birds," said their young mistress, trying to separate them, "there is more sugar in the cor-

ner; how very silly to fight for such a trifle!" But flutter, flutter went the four little wings, quite regardless of the lecture they were receiving. Mary, to quiet them, was obliged to take away the bit of sugar. "How very absurd it seems to such as we are," said the little reasoner to herself, "to see creatures fighting for such a trifle! I wonder if, when Augusta and I are jealous of each other, grown-up people look upon our disputes as just as silly and trifling as I think the quarrel of the canary-birds. I am pretty sure they do; for I have heard mamma and Miss Dalton say something of the kind. But grown-up people quarrel themselves sometimes; I daresay their quarrels appear as foolish and worthless to the Angels and the holy Saints, such as the Gentle Lady, as ours do to them, and the birds' to us; or rather, in their eyes, I should think all must be equally foolish to dispute at all about things which last such a short time. Perhaps even the birds seem to them the least foolish, because we know what is right, and have means given to us to be good. Suppose I was to be in the other world to-morrow, and live in the same way as St. Anselm and the other Saints, how silly I should think myself for having cared whether Augusta was taken more notice of than myself this evening!"

Just then the maid came in to dress Mary, she, the while, still pondering on the same subjects. A very pretty wreath of roses had been prepared for her hair; and when it had been duly settled on the fair brow, the maid, as she left the room, exclaimed, "Your ladyship looks quite as well with those roses as Miss Augusta with all her finery!"

Mary's eyes fell for an instant on the faultless face shadowed in the mirror; and then she covered them with her hands, and said to herself, "I hope God will not allow me to feel conceited or envious, and forget my resolutions, and be more silly than a poor bird."

The victory was achieved. Mary gently disengaged the wreath from her hair, laid it on the table, and ran down stairs. Thus may even so frivolous an occupation as the toilet be sanctified.

Mary had many opportunities that evening of carrying out her resolutions; for though she was generally much liked by all her mother's guests, on this occasion every one's mind was so totally engrossed by other things, that she was left a good deal to herself. Fitzmaur was, of course, the great object with every one; and next to him, it must be admitted that Augusta seemed to be the general attraction. She danced so gracefully, and received all the compliments

that were paid her so prettily, that people who were not wise enough to think of the little heart within, fluttering with vanity and self-love, were disposed to like her extremely. Then there were reasons, which my very young readers would not enter into, why many persons thought it quite worth their while to make up to Lady Charles; and this was best done by flattering her daughter: and others thought it a very nice thing to see Fitzmaur and Augusta together, and appearing to belong to one another; and these gave sundry nods and winks, as if they were thinking of something beyond the present evening. Mary, then, was certainly not so much noticed; but she danced very merrily for all that, took pleasure in the honours done to her brother, and made herself generally useful and agreeable. Even her own dear mamma could not notice her much, and this Mary cared for more than any thing else; but there was no help for it: Lady De Courcy had to attend to her guests; and whenever she was not actually engaged, her eyes and heart were following the movements of her eldest son. There was, however, one of the company who was neither too much engrossed by amusement himself, nor too dazzled by Augusta's splendour, to notice Mary; and this was Mr. Russell. Unperceived by herself, he had

watched her all the evening; and when she was tired of dancing, he beckoned to her to come and sit by him. Her eye lit up with pleasure; for she had seen him engaged in conversation, and had not liked to disturb him. Alice happened to be disengaged at the same time; and when the two little girls had settled themselves in a corner of the seat close to him, they both declared themselves to be very snug; and Mary read in his eyes a look of approbation, which found a response in her own conscience; and she wondered how it happened that the evening seemed so much pleasanter than she had anticipated.

Among the juvenile guests were two young ladies of the neighbourhood, by name the Misses Smith, who never seemed to be at their ease, or to enjoy themselves any where. They were plain, awkward-looking girls, with high shoulders and red hair; and, poor things, they always seemed as if they thought every one disliked them for being ugly. They had, moreover, reached that time of life which, by general consent, seems to be designated "the awkward age," and were consequently shy and unnoticed because too young to be treated as women, and too old to be played with as children.

Just as Mary had seated herself between

Mr. Russell and Alice, her eyes happened to rest upon these two young ladies, standing alone, not appearing to enter into any of the pleasure, but looking very stupid. They had evidently not been dancing at all.

"How dull those poor girls look!" whispered Mary's conscience. "How pleasant it is to be sitting here!" answered her inclination. "They are my guests, and I ought to entertain them," again conscience whispered. "It is much pleasanter to talk to Alice and Mr. Russell," replied Mary's weaker self. "What a good opportunity for self-denial!" continued that persevering conscience.

Mary has bounded from her seat, and is assiduously offering lemonade and cake to the Misses Smith, promising them to manage that they shall soon dance, and in the mean while proposing to shew them the pictures in the hall, or the garden, or any thing they like.

But time passes on, and the evening is drawing to a close, the hour that had been fixed upon for leaving the dance has nearly arrived. An immense concourse of people has assembled, many more than Lord De Courcy had expected; in short, the numbers and the enthusiasm that was demonstrated, more resembled the event of the heir coming of age, than one of the interven-

ing birthdays. This was to be accounted for by Fitzmaur's recent accident; he was, as it were, restored to them from the grave, and consequently doubly cherished. Whatever was the cause, Lord De Courcy duly appreciated the affection testified; he wished them all health, happiness, and many returns of the day; and he was answered by a loud cheer. The music had ceased, and the stillness of the evening was only broken by the hum of voices from both sides of the parterre; for after the dancing was finished, the mingled company of rich and poor naturally formed themselves into two bands. A slight stir was perceptible among the latter, and Fitzmaur's name was heard, every now and then, above the other sounds.

"The fact is, you are such a scrap of a fellow," said Lord De Courcy to his son, "that they cannot see you, my boy; you will have to stand upon a table."

At this moment the old butler came forward (he was a grey-headed man, who had begun his career in the service of Lord De Courcy's father); he came up to Fitzmaur, and said, "You must shew yourself, my lord; they want to make sure you are none the worse for your accident the day before yesterday."

"Oh, pray tell them that I am all the better

for a ducking," replied the boy; "and thank them for me."

"But they won't be satisfied with that," pursued the butler; "they want to see you, you mount this."

Fitzmaur turned round, and saw that six men, some of whom were those who had rescued him from the water, were carrying on their shoulders a board covered with red cloth; and before he quite knew what he was about, he found himself hoisted to the top of this, and exhibited to all. Then rose long and loud the deafening shouts of the gratified assembly. Every hat was waved, and the cries of "God bless Lord Fitzmaur!" "Long life to the young lord!" mingled with enthusiastic cheers, rent the air. Fitzmaur uncovered his head; but though a manly boy, he was rather shy, and not used to such public demonstrations of affection; so when he had stood with wonderful patience for a few seconds, he became restless, and they were obliged to let him down to join the rest of the company. The tenantry were disappointed; their enthusiasm was up now, and they were not so easily satisfied; they had hoped he would have spoken to them. "We want to hear his own voice," they cried; "a word from the young lord, a word from himself."

"You must jump up again, and make a speech," said Lord De Courcy.

"I do not know how to make a speech," replied the boy; "I never made one in my whole life."

The cries of "Lord Fitzmaur! Lord Fitzmaur! We want to see him again, we want to hear his voice," now redoubled.

"Up, up, my boy; say something; you cannot refuse them," said Lord De Courcy.

Fitzmaur felt sincerely and deeply gratified by the enthusiasm testified; but as for making a speech, he had no notion of it at all. Moreover, that very enthusiasm, though it gave him pleasure, was calculated to unnerve him slightly. There is something very affecting in the sound of a multitude of voices shouting and cheering, and to the object of it, the effect, unless it have become a hackneyed thing, must be almost agitating. There were none present who did not sympathise with the noble boy.

Again his father urged him, and he replied: "Papa, I really do not know how to make a speech, unless I may say just anything I feel."

"Of course you may say what you feel," said his father; "you cannot do better."

True, indeed, he could not do better; it were well if many a modern orator would learn from

childhood, that the only real eloquence is the expression of genuine feeling.

Fitzmaur is again placed on the temporary platform, and is again greeted with a loud hurrah, like the roar of falling waters; until some called out, "Silence!" "Silence!" "Lord Fitzmaur is going to speak." Then there was a cry of "Hear, hear!" then a buzzing, "Hush, hush!" and then a silence, so still and so unbroken, that one could almost have heard the breathing of an infant. Fitzmaur's lip quivered an instant, and he felt a slight choking when he attempted to speak; but on gazing round upon those beneath him, he saw his mother, standing a little apart, looking up at him with such tenderness, such pride, as melted his heart. His eye met hers, and in that look he gained confidence; he felt his own enthusiasm rise to the necessary pitch; he felt that to please her he could do any thing; he only wished he had been called upon to pronounce a panegyric on her, and then he thought he could have spoken for ever. Turning now to the expectant auditors, in a clear strong voice he said to them:

"My friends, I thank you very much for these marks of your affection. I am really gratified, much more so than I can tell you, because I am not used to making speeches; but if I

should live to be very old, I shall never forget this birthday. I hope this year will go on and end as happily to all of you as it has begun to me, and that many successive years may find us all well, prosperous, and together. I value your kindness the more, because, having done nothing to deserve it myself, I know it is owing to the love you bear my dear father and mother; and surely I must know better than any of you how well *they* deserve it. But I have time before me; and this I promise you, that I will spend it in constant endeavours to merit the affection I now so undeservedly enjoy."

He paused, and the pause was instantly filled up with reiterated cries of "Hurrah, hurrah!" "Long life to the young lord!" Then, as the sound gradually diminished, there rose a gentle voice above all the others, one that he had heard before, exclaiming, "The God of the orphan and the widow bless Lord Fitzmaur!" The boy heard the words, and knew from whence they must proceed; probably, no one else in the crowd attached to them any particular signification; nevertheless, of all the compliments and well-wishes he had received, this was the most sacred, and the one best calculated to bring down the blessing it invoked.

Once more placed upon the ground, Fitz-

maur pushed through admiring friends to reach her whose look had inspired him, his own dear mother. Although she only said to him, "Pretty well, my boy, for a first attempt," yet he read in her eyes that she was pleased; and he was satisfied. By this means he escaped a great many unnecessary compliments, which, if they had been heard, might have rubbed off that graceful unconsciousness which was the principal charm of all he had said and done. Thus are the holiest feelings of our nature made bulwarks of other virtues.

And now, when the evening's merriment was ended,—when most of the company, both rich and poor, had dispersed to their homes,—the children were still lingering in the drawing-room, putting off to the last the unwelcome duty of going to bed. Augusta, still flushed with excitement and exercise, threw herself into a chair, and disengaging from her hair the crown, which was now faded and rather damaged by the games in which she had joined, she laid it upon the table, exclaiming, "The worst of a pleasant day is, that it is over so soon!"

"There are some pleasures," observed Mr. Russell, "which are not over so soon; I shall leave you to discover which they are."

Fitzmaur and Mary looked at their mother

as if they knew the pleasures alluded to by Mr. Russell: as they wished him "Good night," they had such happy, cheerful countenances, that it were hard to suppose their pleasures had ended with the day.

"Alice," said her father, as the two returned to the rectory, "I hope you and your friends have spent a pleasant day."

"Oh, yes, very," replied the little girl; "I am sure Fitzmaur and Mary have been very happy."

"Do you think, then, that Mary has been happier than Augusta?" said the clergyman; "the latter wore the envied crown, and was queen, and had so many compliments paid to her!"

"Yes, father; but the compliments meant nothing, and the honours of a queen were only for a day, and the crown is already faded. I think Mary's pleasures will last the longest."

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